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*ANNEX*









# CONVENT LIFE;

OR,

THE DUTIES OF SISTERS.

(Devine)  
ZMT  
1871

FRIDUS O'HAGAN, C.P.,

*Censor Deputatus.*

**Imprimatur.**

HENRICUS EDUARDUS,

CARD. ARCHIEP. WESTMONAST.

*Die 16 Julii, 1889.*

# CONVENT LIFE;

OR,

THE DUTIES OF SISTERS  
DEDICATED IN RELIGION

TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.

Intended chiefly for Superiors and Confessors.

WITH

COMMENTARY

On the Decree "Quemadmodum."

BY THE

REV. FR. ARTHUR DEVINE,

PASSION ST,



FOURTH EDITION.

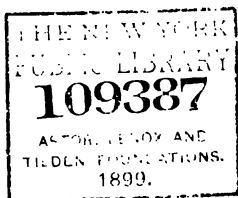
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ROY WEN  
ALLEN  
YARREL

## PREFACE.

—:o:—

**W**HAT I have proposed to myself, in writing this work, has been to explain, from a doctrinal point of view, the duties and obligations of the Religious Life in all its bearings and principles.

Religious, like Seculars, desire to have solid and definite teaching in regard to their obligations, so that their souls may be properly sustained in acquiring evangelical perfection. And, it seems to me, that there is room for a work of this kind, a work that will explain briefly and clearly the obligations of the Religious State and that will offer a succinct analysis of doctrinal teaching on the various important matters in connection with that state.

We have in Latin, in French, in Italian and Spanish, many well digested works which explain these duties very fully and with great accuracy; but we have few works of the kind in English. We have, it is true, plenty of spiritual and ascetical works suitable for Religious, but none which define for us the exact law of the Gospel according to the maxim : *hoc oportet facere et illud non omittere*. In trying to supply this want, I have had to read many works of Theology and Canon Law treating on this subject and to condense the opinions of others wiser than myself.

The old Canon Law arranged most of the duties of Religious and defined their scope. In more recent times, many improvements and changes in the Church's discipline relative to Conventual life have been found necessary, and on this account, in reconciling the old with the new state of things, many difficulties present themselves to those who have to deal conscientiously with these matters.

The germs of the Religious Life were planted by our Saviour's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, and grew to



perfection shortly after the first christian Pentecost. We see the community of goods, the virgins living in their father's houses, and the obedience to the voice of an Apostle frequently referred to in the pages of the New Testament. And the history of the first centuries of the Church gives us heroic examples of those, who observed the evangelical counsels both in the solitude of the desert and in the midst of the persecuted christians in the large cities.

In the fourth and fifth centuries monastic life took another form, according to the Rules of St. Basil and St. Austin. In that epoch it was not very different from the forms of community life which still exist. Religious professed by vow the evangelical counsels; they observed a certain approved Rule and lived in Community.

Enclosure with the excommunications attached to it was of a later date. It was a means which the Church had to make use of to restrain evil-doers, in an age when might set right at nought, when passion had deadened the voice of conscience, and when avarice and simony had crept into the holy places. The Church had to protect those who dedicated themselves to God in Religion; and for this purpose, she had to inflict severe ecclesiastical censures on those who violated her laws. In those days of froward sinfulness and severe penitence the *anathemas* of the Church were capable of striking terror into the most head-strong transgressors of her laws and discipline.

In the seventeenth century St. Vincent de Paul inaugurated a new form of Convent Life. His Sisters of Charity have modesty for a veil, and the houses of the poor and the hospitals for Cloisters. Others followed his example, and it has come to pass, that since the Council of Trent very few Religious Orders or Congregations have been established with Enclosure. Nay, Enclosure would be an obstacle to their utility, and opposed to the end and object of their institution.

In the Church, whilst her doctrine on faith is invariable, her disciplinary laws suit themselves to the needs of every age. What suits at one time is found to be unsuitable at another, and, although her own government is monarchical, her principles can suit themselves to republics and democracies. She has always shown much solicitude and tender care for Religious Institutes. On their behalf she has established a special Congregation in Rome known as the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. This Congregation acts in the name of the Pope, and decides all matters that affect the well-being of Religious. Every safeguard is given, so that those who dedicate their lives and labours to God may have their hundredfold of peace in this life as well as the eternal reward promised them in the next.

In Canon Law and in positive arrangements, the force or the meaning of which are uncertain, reference must be had to the principles upon which they are founded. The principles themselves are founded on the maxim *sic voluerunt priores*; thus, did our Superiors decide. The motives and the causes of their decisions do not enter into the consideration of their sense; but only the authoritative interpretation given by the properly constituted tribunals. There are, in Rome, several of these tribunals or Congregations. Congregations established for everything which concerns the well-being of the Church in general, and every branch of her organisation. Their decisions in special cases apply in similar cases when they arise, like precedents in forensic lay decisions, and it has been my endeavour to show how their decisions apply, to the present practice and discipline of the Religious Life as it exists in these countries, both in regard to vows, rules and spiritual duties.

In treating on the various subjects, besides consulting the principal Theological works of St. Thomas, Suarez, and St. Liguori, and the works of Bouix and Craisson in Canon Law, I have made much use of the "*Confessarius Monialium*" of Cajetan.

tan de Alexandris; the *Traite de L'Etat Religieux* of Father Gautrelet, S.J., and the *Manuale Sacro*, of St. Leonard, of Port Maurice. These I have quoted freely and at times literally

I have divided the work into four parts:—

The first treats of the obligations of Religious by reason of their state, and it contains chapters—*On the nature of the Religious State—Vocation—The obligation of Perfection—The Rule—The Novitiate—Profession and Enclosure.*

The second part is entirely devoted to explaining the vows and their obligations.

The third contains instructions on the principal spiritual duties of the Religious Life—*The Divine Office* and the *Little Office of Our Lady—Mental Prayer—The Sacrament of Penance and Spiritual Direction. The Communion and the Mass. Fasts and Feasts.*

The fourth treats of all matters in connection with the *Election of Superiors*. Also the duties of the *Superior* and the other *Officials* in the Convent; namely, *The Assistant* and *Discreets. The Mistress of Novices. The Bursar, the Sacristan and the Infirmarian.* To which is added a chapter on the duties of the *Lay-Sisters*.

The work concludes with a chapter on Charity, the love of God and our neighbour, which is the end and perfection of the Religious Life.

The work has been submitted to competent judges, of wider and longer experience than my own, in manuscript as well as in its passing through the press. I am far from thinking it a perfect production, or anything approaching such an impossible human standard, but I have omitted no pains and labour to make it as comprehensive and perfect as my abilities would allow.

The author would be obliged to any Superiors or Confessors who find any deficiency in the work to let him know, and he will make the necessary improvements in a future edition.

ST. JOSEPH'S RETREAT, HIGHGATE.

*Feast of our Lady of Mount Carmel, 1889.*

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**PART I.**

**THE OBLIGATIONS OF RELIGIOUS BY  
REASON OF THEIR STATE.**

THE  
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# CONVENT LIFE;

OR,

## THE DUTIES OF SISTERS

DEDICATED IN RELIGION

TO THE SERVICE OF GOD.

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### CHAPTER I.

---

#### ON THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

The Religious State is a condition of life approved by the Church in which, by the observance of vows and rules, one tends towards evangelical perfection.

By state is meant in general any condition of life in which one remains either for a time or permanently. In this sense we have the ecclesiastical state and the secular state, the present state and the future state.

In particular, a state means a fixed or stable condition to which one binds himself. In this sense we have in the Church three states—1. The Episcopal State; 2. The Religious State; 3. The Married State. Or, according to another division—1. The State of Celibacy; 2. The State of Religion; 3. The Married State.

Here we speak only of the Religious State.

The word Religion may be taken in a threefold sense:

1. As a virtue by which God, as the Supreme Lord, is adored.

2. As a community or society of the worshippers of God; and in this sense we speak of the Jewish religion, the Christian religion &c.



3. As a community or society which, in a special manner and according to a special rule of life, dedicates itself to God and to His Service. When this dedication is by the three substantial vows taken in a Religious Institute approved by the Church, it is called a true Religious State, and those belonging to it and professing it are called Religious. Such a state contains all that the Christian religion enjoins, and superadds to that the obligation by vow of observing the evangelical counsels.

Religious men are also called *monks*, according to St. Dionysius, by reason of the indivisible and singular lives which they lead. Religious women, since the time of St. Augustine, are called in Latin *Sanctimoniales* or *moniales* from the Greek word *μόνος* signifying solitude or alone. And since the time of St. Jerome the name *nonna*, or nuns, is also applied to them.

The Religious State may then be defined: "A state of tending towards the perfection of divine charity by means of the three perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience professed in an Institute approved by the Church."

Religious need not belong to the hierarchy either of Jurisdiction or of Orders, but may be simply the faithful in the Church, who make profession in Religion of the aforesaid vows. This is the case with nuns and Religious Brothers who do not receive Sacred Orders.

It is a state of *tending towards the perfection of divine charity*—which means that Religious are bound to endeavour to be united to God in grace and charity. To increase the grace of God in their souls that thus they may be disposed to act with facility and fidelity according to the divine precepts and counsels. Charity is the end of their lives, and as a means to that end Religious have to observe the evangelical counsels as well as the commandments of God and the Church.

It is not required of Religious that they be perfect in the sense that bishops are obliged to perfection, but only that they tend towards perfection according to the Rules and spirit of their Institute. St. Thomas teaches that a Religious who is not perfect does not thereby violate his profession or transgress against it unless he contemn the obligation of tending towards perfection, or determine to remain as he is; or, say, "I shall not acquire perfection;" or, determine to avoid only mortal sin without any care or intention to avoid venial sins or defects.

It is said in the definition: *By means of the perpetual vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience*; because, as I have said, the *Religious State* is a state of tending to perfection in the sense

above explained ; but for obtaining this perfection the observance of the three evangelical counsels are required inasmuch as they remove the impediments in the way of perfection. These impediments are three. 1. Exterior goods of fortune, property, money, wealth, &c. These are removed by the vow of poverty. 2. Cares of married life, family affairs, &c. are removed by the vow of chastity. 3. The difficulties in directing our own actions and regulating our own wills are removed by the vow of obedience. Again, the Religious State is a state of sacrifice, inasmuch as every Religious soul should offer itself as a holocaust to God. This is done by means of the three vows. By the vow of poverty the Religious sacrifices all external goods and possessions; by the vow of chastity the body and all its inclinations are sacrificed; and by the vow of obedience the will and its selfish desires are sacrificed for the love of God.

*The approbation of the Church.*—This approbation involves two things—1. A judgment of the fitness and the utility of such an Institute in the Church; 2. A power given to Superiors to admit postulants to the habit and to profession.

There are various approbations of the Church given to Religious Institutes.

1. *The solemn or definitive*, which may be said to be a kind of canonization given to its Rules and Constitutions. This *definitive* approbation belongs to the supreme and infallible authority in the Church. Although in ancient times bishops gave approbation to Religious Institutes; and, also in recent times, these Religious Institutes very often receive first episcopal approbation, this without at least the tacit approbation of the Pope, cannot constitute them Religious Orders or Congregations; and since the time of the Fourth Council of Lateran this final and definitive approbation is reserved entirely to the Holy See.

2. The approbation called *commendatitia* and not yet *definitive* given to a Religious body by the Holy See which is equivalent to a sort of beatification of its Rules and constitutions, and commends the holiness of its members.

3. *The permissive approbation* of the Holy See such as leave given to Founders to assemble companions.

4. When there is no approbation of the Holy See but an episcopal approbation given to an Institute; but this as I have said can never be *definitive*. It is called an *ecclesiastical approbation*, but it is not strictly speaking the *approbation of the Church*.

Religious Institutes usually begin with episcopal approbation until they are formed into a regular body. Then the Holy See gives an approbation for a time by way of experiment, generally speaking for ten years, and finally the definitive approbation is granted.

It also belongs to the essence of the Religious State that the members give themselves to God, and that this offering be accepted by some person in God's name, as explained further on.\* The reason of this is, because God, according to His ordinary providence, does not guide and direct individuals immediately by Himself, but He wishes them to be guided by His ministers as His representatives. And the offering which Religious make of themselves at their profession should be accepted by His duly appointed representative in the name of the Church and in His name.

The Rules and Constitutions of the various Religious Institutes of men explicitly state that the General or Provincial may receive either by themselves or their delegates, the vows of their subjects; and in regard to Religious women their vows are usually received by the Bishop of the diocese, or by some priest delegated by him.

The approbation of the Church given to Religious Institutes signifies that their Rules and Constitutions contain all that is necessary for the perfection of the religious soul, and the minister of God who receives the vows may therefore on the part of God promise the Religious at profession, life everlasting, if he be faithful in keeping the vows, and the Rules of his Institute.

The Religious State is in its origin and essence of divine institution, but only ecclesiastical as to the particular Institutes and their Rules. Its divine origin is clearly proved from those texts of scripture in which our Saviour teaches the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience. He recommends poverty and its profession in St. Matthew,† *Go sell what thou hast and give to the poor*, &c. Chastity is recommended in the same chapter‡ *He that can take let him take*. And obedience is inculcated in St. Mark,§ *Come and follow me*; and also in St. Luke|| *And it came to pass that a certain man said to him: I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest*. And St. Peter addressing our Lord, said to Him: *Behold we have left all things and followed thee*. Besides this, Christ gave power to His Church to receive in His name all those who should offer themselves to

\*Craisson, No. 2,467.

†xix. 16 et seq.  
‡x. 5, 7 & xviii. 22.

§v. 12.

||x. 21.

enter upon a life of evangelical perfection in the words of St. Matthew,\* *Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven.* And it is probable that the Apostles taught by Christ, bound themselves by vow to the substance or essence of the Religious Life, inasmuch as they were called by Christ and placed in His Church, not only as teachers, but also as examples of all Christian perfection.

From the very beginning therefore of Christianity there were those who led the life of Religious, but, they did not, at first, congregate into any one body after the manner of conventual life. In the middle of the third century Christians who had to take refuge in the solitude of the wilderness, from the persecutions of Decius, lived as Religious and practised the religious virtues and observed the evangelical counsels.

In the 4th and 5th Centuries Monastic Institutes flourished in the East through the works of St. Anthony and St. Basil; and, afterwards, in the West, St. Benedict leading the way as their Father and Founder. In the 11th Century we have the establishment of the Canons Regular; and, then in the 13th Century the Institutes of St. Dominic and St. Francis came into existence, and, in subsequent ages we have the institution of many other Religious bodies such as Jesuits, Passionists, Redemptorists, etc., all of which are true Religious Orders or Congregations approved by the Holy See, in which profession is made of perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, together with a fourth vow regarding the particular and special end and spirit of the Institute.

In every age of the Church also, and side by side with the Religious Orders of men we have Religious Institutes of women which have received the same approbation of the Church and whose members profess the evangelical counsels and consecrate themselves to God by the same Religious vows. These, as we know, have given in every age very many examples of the most heroic virtue and very many saints to the Church of God.

As these Religious Institutes existed from the beginning, so, they exist now in the Church, and they form part of her system. They are not, therefore, something accidental or super-added to the Church's system, but, they belong to it as an integral part, and, therefore, the Religious State in the Church is indefectible. This also follows from the *Note of Sanctity* in the Church. The *Note of Sanctity* requires the public profession of the evangelical counsels; and, the public profession of the evangelical counsels

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\*Chap. x.

constitutes the essence of the Religious State, and, therefore, the Religious State cannot fail entirely in the Church. The public profession of evangelical perfection has Christ for its author. He instituted it in the Church and what He planted in His Church cannot perish; and, therefore, the public profession of the evangelical counsels will always exist in the Church, through which her sanctity will be manifested to the world. This public profession of the evangelical counsels cannot be without poverty, chastity and obedience vowed to God, and, in these the essence of the Religious State consists.

I do not state that any particular Religious Order is necessary or indefectible. No, not any one of them in their existing form and constitution is necessary. Any one of them might be suppressed by the Papal authority; but, it can never happen that all forms of Religious Orders be suppressed or cease to exist in the Church. It is, therefore, opposed to the spirit of Christianity to malign Religious Orders as such, to try to prevent their propagation or to desire their suppression.

I may now conclude from the doctrine here given, that to constitute a true Religious State we require stability, approbation of the Church, the religious vows, either simple, or solemn, the Rules of the Institute, and the obligation of tending towards perfection. All those who make their profession in an Institute thus established belong to a true Religious State and are true Religious in the ecclesiastical sense in which the word is here used.

The stability consists in the absolute and irrevocable donation by which the Religious soul gives itself to God and to the Religious Life.

Those who desire to enter such a State resemble the young man in the Gospel who asked our Saviour; *Lord what shall I do to possess eternal life?* Our Lord's answer to each one to whom He has given a vocation would be the same as that given to the young man: *If thou wilt be perfect go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come and follow me and thou shalt have treasure in heaven.*

The soul on entering Religion should sacrifice everything with willingness and without reserve, riches, pleasures, relatives and friends; and, that without asking with St. Peter: *What therefore shall we have?*

In return, however, God has promised to all Religious:

1. *A hundred-fold in this world.\** That is, spiritual goods

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\*St. Matt. xix. 29.

instead of the temporal goods which they have renounced. And, instead of their natural parents, brothers and sisters they have their spiritual parents, brothers and sisters in Religion.

2. *Eternal life* hereafter: *And everyone that hath left home or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold and shall possess life everlasting.\**

3. Christ in the same place:† *Amen I say to you that you who have followed me in the regeneration when the son of man shall sit on the seat of his majesty, you also shall sit on twelve seats judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

This promise is general and extends to all those who like the Apostles, have left all and followed Christ shall enjoy a like privilege; as, by the *twelve tribes of Israel* is here meant the entire Church, the true spiritual Israel of God.

In the 19th chapter of St. Matthew Our Redeemer teaches the three evangelical counsels, viz., chastity in verse 12, poverty in verse 21, and obedience in the words *follow Me* that is obedient to Me and to My ordinances unto death. And He concludes the chapter by reminding them of the exaltation and reward in store for an humble and hidden life: *And many that are first shall be last; and the last first.*

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## CHAPTER II.

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### THE VOCATION TO THE RELIGIOUS STATE.

There is a special providence or divine impulse by which God calls persons to a state of evangelical perfection, or to the Religious State. This is understood from the notion we have of Divine Providence, and it is clearly proved from the words of our B. Redeemer in the Gospel when speaking of continency. He said: *All receive not this word, but they to whom it is given.‡*

A divine vocation to the Religious State consists in the external and internal aptitude or fitness for that state, together with a supernatural inclination, by which the soul is moved or impelled to embrace such a state.§ On this point it may be remarked that, although Christ wishes the Religious State to exist

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\*Matt. xix. 29. †Ch. xix. v. 28. ‡St. Matt. xix. 11. § Lehmkuhl, No. 506.

in His Church, He does not, however, oblige us to embrace that state, but He exhorts to evangelical perfection. And those who are called to this more perfect manner of life receive from God the gifts and graces that are necessary for it.

Wherefore, when God calls anyone to enter Religion He so ordains things that this may be possible. This would not be the case if external obstacles were such as to render it (1) *physically* impossible for one to enter Religion, or (2) *morally* impossible, in the sense that other obligations already contracted cannot be reconciled with the Religious Life; or, if one should find too great a difficulty in corresponding to the call, which might arise from one's own inclination being so strongly opposed to the Religious Life as to make entrance into it morally impossible in that individual case.

Positive internal aptitude consists in sufficient strength both of body and mind according to the duties and the end of the Institute into which one desires to enter; as, for example, good health, right understanding, intelligence, and a soul disposed to obey and subject itself to the will of another.

The external obstacles in the way of entering Religion are—

1. *Defect of Liberty.* Under this head we have—

(1) Servants bound to their employers; (2) Married people; (3) Those professed in one Order are not free to enter another except in accordance with the dispositions of the Canon Law on this point; (4) Bishops in charge of dioceses.

2. *By reason of justice.* Thus, those who have debts which in justice they are bound to pay and which they may be able to pay in a short time by remaining in the world, should first pay their debts and defer entering Religion until this duty is satisfied. As to the length of time that they are supposed to put off entering Religion authors are not entirely agreed. Some say two years, some say three. But if they have no hope of being able to pay within that time they need not wait, but they may enter without any delay on this account; and, according to St. Liguori, they would not be bound to remain in the world to pay their debts if there would be great danger of their falling into sin or losing their religious vocation.\*

3. *By reason of piety.* Parents should defer entering Religion if they have children to bring up and educate. Children, also, whose parents are in great need should defer entering Religion that they may assist them in their poverty, sickness, or old age. As regards other relatives, such as brothers and sisters in great

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\* Lib. No. 91.

need of help, St. Liguori teaches that one is not obliged to remain in the world for this reason, except in cases of extreme necessity ; but, it may be expedient in such cases to defer entering Religion for a time, especially when younger brothers and sisters have no parents to look after them. In this case an elder brother or sister who is able to do so is in charity bound to take care of the younger ones, and for this reason to defer entering Religion. Besides, parents often require the help of the older children for the care and support of the younger ones, and in those circumstances children should not leave their parents.

To judge of the internal obstacles it is necessary to reflect that the Religious Life is one of evangelical perfection, which is its end and object ; that there are to be observed in it the vows which are the principal means to that end ; that there are rules to be faithfully observed ; that there is community life, submission to superiors, union and charity with its members ; practices of piety, more or less difficult and numerous ; and, in consequence of all these things, there should be in the soul the desire of perfection and the strength to keep vows and rules, etc. Therefore, where infirmity incapacitates one for the duties of the Religious life, where there is weakness of spirit, indomitable passions, and a character incapable of submission, there is wanting the internal aptitude for the Religious State and no true Religious vocation. Besides, the external and internal aptitude for the Religious State there is also required for a vocation a certain supernatural impulse moving or drawing one to enter Religion. One need not have a natural inclination for the Religious Life, on the contrary, a divine vocation is compatible with a natural repugnance for that state.

The impulse or inclination which, ordinarily speaking, is called the vocation itself may be *general* or *particular*. If *particular* it may be *remote* or *proximate*. The general is the invitation to all to be perfect, *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect* which, as it applies to all men, is not considered a vocation, but it is in reality the foundation and the beginning of the *particular* vocation, or the vocation, strictly so called.

The *particular* and *remote* vocation is, as it were, a light motion of the divine grace slightly touching the soul, whereby it understands the beauty, the excellence, and the utility of evangelical perfection ; or it makes it desire that such a state of life might be for it practically possible. If the soul corresponds to this grace it will receive other graces by which it will be moved with greater desire and affection towards the Religious Life, and it will come to have that state practically, as it were, before the mind and the intention.



The *particular and proximate* vocation is a stronger impulse of divine grace by which the soul knows that for it specially the evangelical counsels are not only good and useful and in some sense necessary, but that it ought to profess them, to follow religious perfection and to enter upon the Religious State of life.

This impulse has its grades. It is stronger in some than in others, and may vary in the same individual. This, then, is what is meant by a vocation to Religion. When God, as it were, says to the soul, *Go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and then come and follow Me.* "Follow My example and My counsels live on this earth poor and despoiled of all things; be subject to the will of another for the love of Me; preserve yourself pure and free from all sensual pleasures; enter into one of those Religious Orders or Congregations approved in My Church; consecrate yourself to Me in Religion."

The invitation may be even more particular, so as to specify the particular Institute which it is God's will that one should enter. On this point I need only remark that those who are persuaded of their vocation to Religion should take advice as to the selection of the Institute or the particular Order into which they may wish to enter, and in their choice let them be guided 1. By the consideration of the state of the regular discipline and the exact observance of the Institute, and 2. By the consideration of its duties and its spirit, that they may be the better able to judge of their fitness for it.

Concerning a clear and certain vocation, such as I have here endeavoured to explain, the question is asked, How would a person sin by not corresponding to it?

Theologians answer this question in the following manner :—Rigorously speaking one does not sin by not following a Religious vocation, because the divine counsels do not of themselves impose any obligation as in this, they are distinguished from precepts and commandments.

The soul, however, that neglects its vocation to the Religious State can scarcely be free from fault, inasmuch as, it neglects the special means of salvation that God has offered it; and, if it be fully persuaded that it cannot otherwise be saved outside the state of Religion then it would be a grievous fault not to correspond to the vocation.

There is no doubt that they who neglect to follow the call of God in this matter, expose their salvation to great danger. By remaining in the world after receiving this divine call they deprive themselves of those special helps and graces which the providence

of God had in store for them in Religion, and they will with difficulty be able to bear up against all the dangers and temptations of a life in the world.

Those, however, who have missed, so to say, their vocation, and for whom it is no longer possible to enter Religion should study, by greater fervour and fidelity in the duties of the state they have chosen for themselves, to compensate for their spiritual losses as well as they can by the practice of the Christian virtues. God can so ordain things as to bestow upon such souls more efficacious graces, even though they may have once rejected His vocation, and they may through those graces lead good lives and sanctify themselves in the world. What God may do in particular cases belongs to the mystery of the distribution of graces, which must not be investigated by us but humbly adored. We should, however, receive with gratitude and holy fear of the divine judgment God's vocation, and co-operate with it as one of His very special graces, always remembering the words of the Holy Spirit : *Think of the Lord in goodness and seek him in simplicity of heart.\**

According to St. Thomas, long deliberation and much consultation is not necessary to decide a religious vocation. He says † "Greater signs are required to decide that it is the will of God, that one should remain in that state, in which it is sufficient to observe the precepts than to enter upon the way of the counsels, because God has so clearly exhorted to the counsels." And this holy Doctor also teaches that unless the impediments in the way of entering Religion are certain, the deliberation should be about the choice between the different Orders, and the manner of carrying out one's vocation, rather than about entering the Religious State itself. For the things about which it is necessary to enquire are very easily settled. They are either 1. External obstacles, 2. Natural gifts or talents or the want of them, or 3. Bodily strength or health, or 4. Strength of soul and a sincere will. Concerning the first there can be no difficulty in forming an opinion, and long deliberation is not at all necessary. As to the second it is better to be guided by the opinion of others than by one's own judgment. Long inquiry and investigation is not necessary for the third. In doubtful cases it might be well to know that it often happens that health and strength are better preserved in Religion than in the world, and many weak persons get strong in Religion and enjoy good long lives. Concerning the fourth point of investigation,

\* Wisdom i. 1.

† Summa' ii. ii. 2, 189.

humanly speaking, we cannot ourselves judge of it with certainty, but our whole confidence and trust should be placed in the help of the Divine grace, and then the conscience can rest satisfied and bear testimony to the sincerity of the will.

It is the duty of those who admit postulants into Religion, more than of the postulants themselves, to enquire into and examine their motives and their qualifications. Superiors and Confessors in this important duty must consider well the good of the Institute, and should not admit useless members who would only be a burthen to a Community and whose conduct might be to the detriment of Religious discipline.

It is furthermore taught that it would be sinful for one who is certain of no vocation to become a Religious, because of the danger to salvation which is incurred by taking upon oneself obligations which, morally speaking, cannot be fulfilled without a vocation. The fault, however, would no longer exist when one would repent of it, and firmly resolve to fulfil with the aid of divine grace all the obligations. What I have said so far refers to vocations in the ordinary sense and according to the ordinary providence of God. There may be extraordinary vocations either (1) by revelation as, in the case of St. Paul, St. Aloysius, St. Stanislaus, and many others; or (2) by a singular and extraordinary inspiration which would consist in an internal movement of grace vehemently impelling the soul or attracting it to the more perfect life.

I may here give some of the motives which usually impress the soul, and inspire it with the desire of the Religious Life, taken from the treatise on the Religious State, by F. Gantrelet, S.J. :—

1. The vanity of earthly things which cannot satisfy our heart or content our desires.
2. The distaste which a perverse and corrupt world inspires, and the horror one may feel for its ways and customs.
3. The fear of suffering, like so many others, a terrible and eternal shipwreck.
4. The desire to be forgotten and to forget oneself, and to live a tranquil life far removed from worldly honours.
5. The fear of sin, into which it is so easy to fall, and against which it is so difficult to preserve oneself.
6. The necessity to work out our salvation and to escape damnation, and the helps towards this in the Religious Life.
7. The desire of doing penance for the faults and sins which we may have fallen into.

8. The hope to gain heaven, to secure a death precious in the sight of God, and to prepare oneself for a favourable judgment.

9. The thought of the spiritual helps afforded by the Religious Life, in the exercises of piety, the observance of rules, the vigilance of superiors, the example of religious companions, direction, &c.

10. The happiness of living in community with religious companions.

11. The thought of the many merits one may gain in this state, the graces that are bestowed on good Religious, and the glory that awaits them.

12. The peace, security, joy, and happiness, of a soul that belongs entirely to God.

13. The example of the saints who have gone before us, and who have left us wonderful lessons of devotedness to God and contempt of the world.

14. The desire to give oneself freely to prayer, to contemplation, and to live in solitude alone with God.

15. The security of doing in all things the will of God by obedience, and of gaining merit in all our actions, even the most insignificant.

16. The consolation of doing something for God, in making a sacrifice of oneself to His service, and in renouncing all things in order to follow Jesus Christ.

17. The desire to unite oneself entirely to God, and to acquire great perfection.

18. The desire to become more conformed to Jesus Christ, poor, humble, suffering and obedient for us.

19. The desire to labour for the salvation of souls, and to suffer much for this end.

20. The desire to procure the greater glory of God, in a manner the most secure, the most excellent, the most efficacious, and the most perfect.

According to this author\* the vocation or attraction to Religion should have the following three qualities or conditions, namely, it should be *constant*, *reasonable*, and *determined*. *Constant*, that is, the motive for entering Religion should be in the mind for some time, and that not only at the moment of fervour, but when one is engaged in other designs and projects. It should also be considered whether this is the one leading thought of the mind or not: whether the inclination to enter Religion is pure in its motive; whether it acts on the soul at the time of greater recollection or union with God in prayer

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\* Vol. I., page 30.

as well as at other times, for if these thoughts of Religion present themselves when the soul is in calmness and peace and if they leave after them in the soul peace and quietude, one may rest assured that the attraction or vocation comes from God.

2. *It must be reasonable*, or, in accordance with sound judgment, that is to say, that the desire of the heart be accompanied with and guided by the judgment of reason. One should consider seriously the advantages and disadvantages on both sides and weigh them well. These considerations should rest on supernatural rather than natural motives. The glory of God, our own salvation and the sanctification and salvation of others should decide all this deliberation and clear up all doubts as to a Religious vocation.

3. *It must be determined or definite*. That is, it should be founded on the particular motives which may influence the soul towards the end and object of the Order or Congregation it may desire to enter. Such as the attraction to the contemplative life, to solitude and prayer when there is question of entering an Order dedicated to this kind of life, zeal for the salvation of souls which attracts to an active Order. A desire of suffering and penance for the more austere Orders, and so on of all the rest. The opposition one may feel towards the object and work of a particular Institute, ordinarily speaking, may be regarded as a sign of the want of vocation to that Institute. At least the choice in this case should be carefully examined, as it may happen that persons feel a sensible repugnance to a thing which they really esteem and value, and the demon often uses this repugnance as a means to prevent souls from entering upon a life of virtue and holiness.

When a person receives the grace of a Religious vocation she should use all the means of corresponding to it and of persevering in it with earnestness and fidelity.

These means are chiefly three, *prayer, reflection and counsel* or in other words God, the soul and the Confessor.

1. *Prayer*. It is in prayer that one consults God, and it is in it also that He speaks to us and makes known to us His holy will. It is in prayer that we should endeavour to purify our inclinations and motives in the choice of a state of life, and it is in and through it that a vocation is determined and fortified. In it God gives light to the soul to dispel the darkness of passions and prejudices; in it He lets the soul see the nothingness and vanity of all perishable things and makes it esteem and love the Religious State by which it may consecrate itself entirely to Him

2. *Reflection.* This should be united with prayer. Reflection or the attentive consideration of all the advantages and disadvantages of the Religious Life; the profound knowledge of oneself, one's disposition, character, habits, tastes, needs, talents, powers, resources, etc., these should be considered on the one hand; and, on the other, the end, means, vows, Rules and usages of the Institute into which one wishes to enter. A species of conviction is thus acquired of the exalted nature of the Religious Life and its value which forms a solid basis of a Religious vocation and a sustaining prop to it.

3. *Counsel.* That is, the advice of a Confessor. It is most useful to have the advice of a wise and discreet man on a matter of so much importance. The decision of a wise and prudent confessor to whom the state of the soul has been manifested will be a safe guide to direct us in this matter and to protect us against error and delusion. Religious should always have recourse to this same means in every difficulty and trouble of their subsequent Religious lives.

Being convinced of our vocation we should follow it *promptly, entirely, and irrevocably.*

We may conclude this chapter with the advice of St. Francis de Sales\* "A good vocation is simply a firm and constant will which the called person has to serve God in the way and in the places that Almighty God has called him to: that is the best mark that one can have to know when a vocation is good. Not that it is necessary that such a soul should do from the beginning all that it must do in its vocation with so great a firmness and constancy as to be exempt from all repugnance, difficulty, or disgust, in the matter of its vocation; still less, that this firmness and constancy must be such as to make it exempt from committing faults; nor has it to be so firm as never to come to waver or vary in its undertaking to practise the means which may lead it to perfection; since all men are subject to such passions, to change, to vicissitudes, and are not to be judged by these different movements and accidents so long as the will remains firm as to the point of not quitting the good which it has embraced, though it may feel some disrelish and coldness.

"So that to have the sign of a good vocation there is not needed a sensible constancy, but an effective one. To know whether God wills one to be a religious man or woman, one is not to wait for Him sensibly to speak to us, or to send us an angel from heaven to signify His will; nor is there any need to have

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\* Collection of Letters, Bk. V., No. 8.

revelations on the subject. Neither is there need of an examination by ten or twelve doctors of the Sorbonne to try whether the inspiration is good or bad to be followed or not; but one must properly cultivate and correspond with the first movement, and then not be troubled if disrelish or coldness supervenes.

"For if one try to keep the will always firmly fixed upon seeking out the good which God shows us, He will not fail to make all turn to His glory."

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### CHAPTER III.

#### PERFECTION AND ITS OBLIGATION.

The first obligation of Religious is, that by reason of their state they are bound to tend towards perfection.

On this subject the following questions have to be explained :

1. What is meant by Religious perfection ?
2. What is the nature of the Obligation ?
3. How may Religious sin against the Obligation ?

1. It is certain that Religious, by reason of their state, are bound to tend to perfection : and, in this, they differ in a manner from seculars. To those who belong to the secular state Christ says only : *Keep the Commandments*—but to Religious, those to whom He refers by the words : *if thou wilt be perfect He says : Go sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come and follow Me*, by which the evangelical counsels are signified, and as a consequence evangelical perfection.

In further explanation of this point, and in order to state more distinctly what is meant by Religious or Evangelical perfection, I give here the teaching of F. Concina, in his treatise on the Religious state.

All Christians, whether lay or ecclesiastical, secular or religious, are bound by precept to tend to perfection. The perfection that is here spoken of consists in charity, as the Gospels and the Holy Fathers teach. Hence S. Thomas\* says that the Religious State is a certain school or profession (*disciplina*) of acquiring perfection.

That Religious may the more easily and the more quickly attain this perfection, they promise by vow the observance of the three evangelical counsels to which the other duties and virtues

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\* 2, 2, q. 86, Art. 2.

of their state are reducible. These three vows are the instruments, and, as it were, the wheels, of the chariot which carries them along the road of perfection. All the evangelical precepts are the *necessary* means, the evangelical *counsels* are the free instruments required for the perfect fulfilment of the precept of charity. Charity is the end of all the precepts and counsels.

Evangelical perfection, therefore, does not consist either in Counsels or the Commandments, but only in charity to which all are by precept obliged to tend whether they be Secular or Religious. Christ said: *Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect*, and He addressed His words not to Religious only who were not then instituted, but to all mankind. This Charity separates the soul from the love of the world and the things of the world, and unites it to God. And inasmuch as the soul is separated from the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life, the three great evils of the world according to St. John, in so much is it the more intimately united to God. To this union with God all Christians are obliged by precept, and, therefore, all Christians are obliged to tend to the perfection of charity.

But this is the difference between the perfection of Seculars and the perfection of Religious. Seculars are obliged to perfection only by reason of the precepts or commandments. Religious are also obliged to the counsels which they have undertaken to observe by the three vows of Religion.

It behoves Christians, therefore, to be vigilant in keeping the precepts, which order the duty of prayer, custody of the senses, mortification and purity of the heart, because these and all the other precepts, as I have said, are the necessary means of acquiring the perfection of charity and union with God: and as the union can be greater in one than in another, so one may be more perfect than another. On the other hand Religious, besides the precepts are also obliged to keep their vows, together with the rules and constitutions which are prescribed for them as the means of leading them securely and with facility to the perfection of their state of life.

How then may we know whether Seculars or Religious are tending to perfection or not? Christians in general, who abstain from the vain pomps of the world, from luxury, from pride, and from occasions of violating the precepts of the Decalogue; who are assiduous in prayer, who observe equity and justice with their fellow-creatures, who do to others as they would wish others to do unto them, and who fulfil the duties of their particular state in



life, these give signs of advancing in the way of Christian perfection.

In regard to Religious how may we know whether they are advancing? Perhaps by their observance of silence, their attention to prayer, their mortification of the senses and the appetite and the fulfilment of the three vows of *poverty, chastity, and obedience*? All these are, it is true, signs of perfection, and where they are not, there is no perfection. But sometimes they are fallacious signs for all these things may be fruits of hypocrisy. One may do all these things to obtain superiority or in order to be considered a good Religious and a faithful observer of Rule, and thus become under the cloak of Religion a victim of satan.

What then are the real signs of one who aspires to Religious and Christian perfection? They are the exercise of charity, love towards all and forbearance under injuries, candour of mind, sincerity of speech, docility, contempt of worldly things, evangelical perfection. These are the signs of Religious as well as Christian perfection. We can have the means sometimes without the end, but not the end without the means. This is the reason why ceremonious observance of vows, constitutions and other rites may appear externally, and nevertheless be destitute of the nuptial garment, and hidden under the veil of hypocrisy. But the exercises of charity cannot proceed except from charity, and they are the truest test of perfection.

This same author (Cœcina) goes on to say that those Religious superiors do not satisfy their obligation who in their chapters speak only against the transgression of ceremonies and scarcely ever inculcate anything but the observance of silence, frequenting the choir, certain fasts and genuflections. All these are much to be esteemed and praised, but it is to be deplored that they omit to exhort, to persuade and urge the exercise of charity.

When once this flame is enkindled in the soul of a Religious, all other things flow from it. Charity is a most fruitful plant which bears fruit ripe for eternity. *Charity* says, St. Paul, *is patient, is kind, charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, &c.* This heavenly fire always shines forth wherever it is, sends forth its rays, and if it be in the hearts of superiors, it will, without doubt, penetrate the souls of their subjects. Charity, by a sweet treaty of benevolence, unites souls together, and makes a whole community have as *it were but one heart and one mind.*

From this doctrine we may reason that a Religious in order to

fulfil the obligation of tending to perfection should exclude all that is opposed to the love of God. Sin is to be banished from the soul, not only mortal, but as far as possible deliberate venial sins. To say that the soul is perfect which is free from grievous sin and that it tends towards perfection when it seeks to recover the grace of God is simply saying that one has charity or tends towards charity, and has therefore the essence of perfection, but to say that the Religious state only imposes on its members the obligation of avoiding mortal sin is not correct. In any state all men are obliged to this; not only Christians but even the most ignorant Pagans are obliged by the law of God and the natural law to save their souls, and therefore to live in the grace of God. A state of freedom from mortal sin may be one of perfection, and a soul may be in that state without one being in a state of perfection speaking of the different states of life such as the Religious and secular states; but it would appear that the Religious soul is bound to more than this. It should be able to say to itself: "when I entered this state of life I took upon myself the obligation of endeavouring to acquire the grace and disposition to be willing to die rather than commit a mortal sin, and also to suffer and sacrifice all things rather than commit a venial sin deliberately." That is the perfection one should aspire to in Religion, and when it is acquired the soul will be inflamed with the charity of God. It is not obliged to have this perfection on the day of Profession, or any day afterwards, but it is obliged continually to tend towards it, and if this be done it will certainly arrive at it. It must not then rest, but endeavour to advance still farther, as we cannot in divine charity reach so high a degree in this life that further progress is not possible, and in the spiritual order according to the teaching of ascetical writers, not to advance is to go back.

2ndly. What is the nature of this obligation? The obligation of tending to perfection binds the Religious soul under pain of mortal sin because it is in a grave matter in which the substance of the Religious State consists. All Religious know this when they enter Religion, or at least, before they make their profession. It is not, however, a distinct obligation from that of keeping the vows and rules, as faults and precepts must not be multiplied unnecessarily, and without evident reasons. It is therefore, sufficient at Confession to mention the sins committed against the vows or rules without a distinct accusation of having failed in the duty of tending towards Religious perfection.

Religious are bound by this strict obligation as is evident from

those proofs from Holy Scripture by which we show this obligation as binding on all Christians according to each one's state and grade. St. Paul says\* *As he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in his sight of charity.* And St. Peter speaking to all Christians exhorts them, "But according to him who has called you, who is Holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy; Because it is written *You shall be holy, for I am holy.*"† St. John says to all,‡ *Love not the world, or the things that are in it. If any man love the world the charity of the Father is not in him.* In the Gospel of St. Luke§ Our Lord says, *If one come to me and does not hate his father, mother, and wife, and children, and brother, yea even his own soul, he cannot be my disciple.* And in the Gospel of St. Matthew,|| *If any one will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me.*

All these texts apply with greater force to Religious than to Seculars, and form the strict obligation of tending towards perfection. The Fathers and Doctors of the Church explicitly teach this doctrine. St. Jerome says that for a monk to become unwilling to be perfect is to fail in one's duty, and Eusebius says, "to come to Religion is indeed the greatest perfection, but not to live perfectly in Religion is the greatest damnation;" and St. Bernard shows us clearly how the Religious is placed in regard to this duty: "O, monk, do you not wish to advance? No. You wish then to fail or go back? No, I do not. What then? You speak thus, 'I wish to live and to remain as I am, and I do not allow myself to get worse, and I do not desire to be any better.' Do you therefore wish that which cannot be, which is impossible? For what is it that stands immovable in the world?"

3rdly. How may Religious sin against this obligation? They sin against the obligation of tending towards perfection who in the first place fail to keep their vows. The Religious who breaks her vows cannot be said to be on the road to perfection, and here it may be remarked that the vows form the centre around which all the other observances of our state are arranged. If there be observances in Religion for procuring food and clothing, as, for example, labour, begging, teaching, etc., they refer to and are regulated by the vow of poverty. Other observances, such as fastings, watchings, mortifications, and the like, are ordained for the keeping of the vow of chastity. The other duties of our state that appertain to the love of God and our

\* Eph. i. 4. † 1 Peter i. 15 and 16. ‡ 1, ii. 16.

§ Chap. xiv. 29.

|| Chap. xvi. 24.

neighbour, such as spiritual reading, praying, visiting the sick, etc., are comprehended under the vow of obedience, inasmuch as all such employments are regulated and directed by the will of the Superior or by the Rule. So that in reality all our duties and employments may be said to be in connection with our vows, and faults and failings in them are calculated to draw away the soul from the love of God and the perfection to which it is obliged.

They also sin against the obligation who transgress the Rule even when it binds under venial sin only, or, in fact, under no sin, that is, when they violate it with a view of impeding their perfection; and they sin who firmly propose to themselves in no way to attend to the perfection of their state of life, because this would be directly opposed to that which they have promised. Likewise those who have wilful contempt for the counsels which lead to perfection. Such contempt would be when a Religious would refuse to be subject to the counsels as delivered by God, or when she would think so little of the counsels as to despise them. But if a Religious has regard for her spiritual progress, and reveres the counsels as delivered by God, and yet does not care to observe them, either because she may consider them as not binding under mortal sin or not necessary to salvation, she would not in this case sin mortally (Sanchez). She would, however, sin venially, because there is always some contempt and fault in wilfully omitting the intention or execution of the means conducive to her spiritual progress.

In conclusion it may be said that Religious are not obliged to all that is of counsel, or to do every good thing that may arise in their way, but only to that which by the Rules of their Institute they have promised and undertaken. It is good, for example, to teach the young, and yet some Religious are not allowed to have charge of schools; it is good to give alms to the poor, and yet Religious in general cannot do this; it is good for some to keep silence and for others to speak and so on. All these things, like many others, are good and praiseworthy, but they are not obligatory unless prescribed by Rule or belong to our State. On this account Religious need not be too anxious about unusual and extraordinary efforts to do what others do not. They need not be uneasy or think that they are not advancing in perfection if they do not perform a certain number of private devotions or say so many private prayers every day; or, if they do not give their names to and join every new devotion, provided they are faithful to the duties and devotions and spirit of their Rules and Constitutions. All the devotions are good and meritorious, especially

when they are approved by the Church. Nevertheless, they should not be allowed to interfere with the observance of the duties of our state. Those who are inclined to practise them should be careful in their judgments of those who are not like themselves in this respect, and they should not imagine that these in the least fail in their endeavours to acquire perfection by the omission of such works of piety as are supererogatory and entirely voluntary. And souls that are not drawn to such extra devotions should not imagine themselves guilty or defective in their religious lives provided, as I have said, they are faithful to their Rules, and the spirit of their vocation, for, a Religious is not obliged to do every good thing that is of counsel, but only to do well what she has engaged and promised to do.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE RULE.

The three vows of Religion are common to all Religious Orders, but besides these each Order has its own peculiar Statutes, Constitutions and Rules which distinguish it from the others. So that together with the observance of the vows Religious are bound also to the observance of the Rules and Constitutions of their Order, because she who would only observe the three vows could not be said to be a Religious of any Order; and therefore to have the spirit of one's state and to advance in the perfection of that state, the observance of Rules and Constitutions are necessary.

What is the nature of this obligation? and how does a Religious sin by transgressing her Rules and Constitutions? are the questions to be here considered.

The Rules and Constitutions partake of the nature of a law and are therefore binding on all those who have subjected themselves to them by promise at their profession. Whether they oblige under sin or only to the penalty can be determined by the Rules themselves, for in connection with most Rules there is a declaration as to their binding power whether under sin or not. The following teaching may, however, be applied to Religious Rules in general and to their obligation :—

1. To say that a Religious would sin mortally by every transgression

gression of Rule would be to make the Religious State more dangerous than the Secular. It would not then, as St. Gregory says, "be a secure harbour, but a fluctuating sea."

2. The Rules of Religious Orders prescribe observances in connection either with the vows or with the Religious virtues, or in indifferent matters, or in things that are in themselves indifferent.

In matters connected with the vows the Rules bind under sin because at profession the Religious promises by vow to observe poverty, chastity, and obedience according to the Rules and Constitutions of the Institute. Hence it would be a sin against poverty to have in our possession and for our use goods beyond what is allowed by the Rule, and so on of the other vows.

In regard to the virtues prescribed by the Rules, such as humility, charity, patience, and the like. It is clear that by offending against these virtues by pride, or anger, or any other vice, one sins more or less according to the nature of the transgression. These are the common Christian virtues which bind of themselves without the Rule, and therefore the sins against them are sins both in Seculars and Religious.

In things that are in themselves indifferent, for example, silence in certain places and at certain times, what is to be done in the refectory, kitchen, class-room, choir, etc., these and such like points of Rule do not bind under sin when their violation is not accompanied by contempt. It is in this sense we should understand the declaration of the Rules themselves when they state, as many Rules do state, that they do not bind subjects under sin. I need scarcely add that when the Rules themselves declare that they do not bind under sin then no one should teach that they do, except in the sense that I have endeavoured to explain.

3. All spiritual writers are agreed that the transgression of the Rules through formal contempt would be a grievous sin, because it would be a sin of formal disobedience, and this is true even when the Rules themselves do not oblige under sin or only under venial sin, because, though the matter may be in itself light, the contempt as supposed is grave and formal.

In three ways therefore it may be said that the Religious Rules may be transgressed with sin, and with grievous sin too, if the other conditions of grave matter and full deliberation be not wanting.

1st. By breaking the Rules in matters closely connected with the vows so that by their transgression the vows also are violated.

2ndly. In offending against the virtues ordered to be practised by the Rule.

3rdly. By breaking the Rules through contempt.

This last may require some further explanation. To break the Rule through formal contempt would be to break it, if we may suppose such a thing, for the sake of breaking it, or because we deem it foolish or useless. St. Francis de Sales gives the following signs of formal contempt:—(1.) When on being corrected one shows little or no sign of improvement. (2.) When she continues without testifying any desire or will to amend. (3.) When she maintains that the Rule or just command is unsuitable. (4.) When she endeavours to lead others into the same fault, and to quiet their fears by telling them "*it is nothing*," and that there is no harm in it.

These signs are not quite certain proofs of formal contempt, because they might proceed from other causes, such as anger or passion, or dislike of the precept, or Rule. They are, however, signs of an imperfect Religious, and they lead to contempt if they proceed not from it.

The violation or transgression of Rules in the three ways above-mentioned cannot be without sin, for the reason given by the same Saint who says "that it would be impossible to exempt from sin one who disgraces and dishonours the things of God, contradicts her profession, overthrows the Congregation, and dissipates the fruits of good example and of good order which she should produce towards her neighbour." He says, moreover, that voluntary contempt of the kind named would be followed at length by some great chastisement from heaven, and particularly by the privation of the graces and gifts of the Holy Ghost.

The habit of transgressing Rules is not formal contempt, but is often a virtual or interpretative contempt of them. Such a habit disposes to formal contempt in the same way as venial sin disposes the soul to mortal; wherefore when a Religious adverts to the fact that such a habit exposes her to the danger of formal contempt, or of transgressing against the vows, and of leading others into sin, she is obliged to correct it and guard against it.

If, however, the transgressions of Rule which otherwise do not bind under sin, be through negligence, without any or with only a slight reason, or through passion, or from an inordinate will, as for example, breaking silence, the fasts of Rule, &c., it would be a venial sin, and on this account it is said by some spiritual writers that the Rules can seldom be transgressed voluntarily and deliberately without fault, because they can scarcely ever be transgressed without one or other of those accompaniments which make the transgression at least a venial sin.

4. Many evils follow from neglect of the observance of Rules—

(1.) Cockle is sown amongst the good seed and chokes it up. In this way neglect of observance of Rule destroys in a great measure the other good works we may perform. The remissness, looking upon observance as a matter of small importance, and this negligence expose us to great danger. *He who is faithful in little things is faithful also in that which is greater*, and, again, the wise man says: *He who despises small things shall fall by little and little.*

(2.) The neglect of Rule, as experience teaches, in many Orders, leads to grave inconveniences in a community, and opens the way even to grievous sins and to the loss of vocations.

(3.) There are the great evils of the future to be feared. The zizania, or cockle, was tied in bundles and cast into inextinguishable fire. At least it may be safely taught that the pains of purgatory await the transgressors of Rule, unless, in this life, they make sufficient reparation.

Whilst treating on this subject, there is one point in reference to the faults or sins of Religious that it may be well to advert to, that is the question whether the same sins are more grievous in Religious than in Seculars? For it is often stated that the sins of Religious are more grievous than the sins of Seculars.

A general answer may be given to this question. A Religious sinning through contempt or against the vows or by giving scandal, sins more grievously than a Secular, in other cases the sin of a Religious is not more grievous. Thus a Religious in breaking the vow of poverty by appropriating something without permission would commit two sins, one against the vow, the other against the 7th Commandment; whilst, in a similar case, a Secular would only be guilty of one sin, namely, that against the Commandment which forbids theft.

A sin of contempt is more grievous in a Religious, because the ingratitude is greater, for *to whom much is given of them much shall be required*; and the sin of scandal is always greater when given by a Religious man or woman, because to them and to their example all the faithful look for edification.

In other cases the sin of a Religious is not more grievous than the sin of a Secular. When it is a sin not through contempt, but through infirmity, and when it is not against the vows or with scandal, then if it be only venial it is soon repented of and atoned for by the good works that a Religious has daily and hourly to perform, and if unfortunately it should be a grievous sin, the Religious cannot remain long in that state. She must dispose



her soul for Communion, she must go at regular and stated times and often to Confession. Besides, Religious have much spiritual reading, many meditations and prayers and examens, and many other means which Seculars have not, by which they may the sooner and the more easily free themselves from the stains of sin and regain the possession of God's grace.

Some motives for the observance of Rule may here be given.

St. Paul, writing to the Galatians, says: *Whosoever shall keep this rule, may peace and mercy be upon them.* These words may be represented as coming from the Founders of Religious Orders to their children in giving them their Rules. It is piously believed that many of them had a special assistance of the Holy Ghost in writing their Rules. And the approbation which the Church gives to the Rules of Religious Orders amounts to a declaration that they contain the means of perfection, so that from this it may be concluded that a Religious who faithfully keeps the Rules will save her soul. To this end the following means should be observed: (1.) The Rules should be often piously read—In some Orders, such as the Benedictines, the Passionists, and others, a portion of the Rules is read every day, so that the Religious, by meditation and reading, may keep their obligations before their minds, and see whether they fulfil them. This practice helps much to dispel tepidity. (2.) The Rules should be exactly observed, because not the hearers of the word or of the law, but the doers thereof are just before God, and the wise man has said: *Keep the law and counsel and there shall be life to thy soul and grace to thy mouth.\**

Let no fault against the Rules be committed in speech. St. James says, *If any one think himself a religious, not bridling his tongue but deceiving his own heart, that man's religion is vain.* The advice given for this is "to keep silence when and where we should be silent, and to speak when and where we should speak." Let the Religious mortify her own will and judgment, and not interfere with the concerns of others; and, above all, have nothing to do with *externs*, but merely what duty commands. In this way the Rules will be faithfully observed, and they will lead us to the perfection of our state. The religious soul should always be courageous. When one has a firm and constant desire of her own perfection, she should not be disheartened if she fail sometimes. All have daily faults and failings. She, therefore, who may violate the Rules through weakness, and stops or stumbles on the road, and recovers herself immediately to move on more quietly, and if

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\* Prov. iii. 21.

she fail again, and again resumes her journey, such a soul is not out of the way of perfection provided she all along retains the firm and constant resolution of acquiring the perfection of her state and preserving and increasing in her soul the charity of Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, let us remind all Religious to have in their hearts a great desire of perfection according to the spirit and the Rule of their Institute.

(1) One can never perform the duties of a Religious properly, or keep her Rules unless she has the desire of perfection.

(2) The absence of the desire of perfection argues the presence of self; and where self-love reigns there cannot be a real desire of perfection.

(3) Religious are received under the implied condition that they endeavour to be perfect according to the spirit of their Rules.

(4) "Be desirous," says a recent author, "of becoming perfect, and perfect you will become even by a miracle."

What is here said applies to all. A long time in Religion does not lessen our obligation. On the contrary, the older we are, the more are we obliged to give good example to the younger Religious. Let us, therefore, take care of the Rule and the Rule will take care of us; let us take care of small as well as great things; let us cultivate a spirit different from that known as a worldly spirit in our manner of acting, speaking, and thinking, and we shall never fail in the perfection to which we are by Rule obliged, and we shall become holy as our Divine Master is holy, and perfect in the manner He wishes us to be perfect.

The good, observant Religious secures for herself a three-fold crown: (1) A crown of divine grace, according to the words, *My son, hear the instruction of thy father and forsake not the law of thy mother, that grace may be added to thy head and a chain of gold to thy neck*;\* (2) A crown of religious virtues; the virtues ordered by the Rule and acquired through its observance; (3) A crown of triumph and of heavenly glory, *An obedient man shall speak of victory*.† By the observance of all, even the small points of the Rule, do we show our fidelity to God.

It is said that it is a sign of predestination to be a Religious according to the promise that God has made to those who leave all things for Him, but Religion as a sign of predestination can only be said to apply to such souls as perfectly conform themselves to its spirit and the Rule of their Order.

To such as do indeed thus conform themselves the state of Religion may be regarded as a sign of their predestination.

## CHAPTER V.

## ON THE RECEPTION OF NOVICES.

In receiving postulants into Religion, various conditions and requirements have to be attended to. Some of these conditions are prescribed by the natural law, some by the general law of the Church, and some by the particular laws of each Institute. In the reception of novices all these things have to be considered in regard to God and the good of religion, and without being influenced by the ties of flesh and blood, or other human motives.

Taking into consideration the circumstances of time and place, the duties of the particular Institute, its austerities, &c., it is certain that those only should be received into it who are able and suitable for that particular kind of life, for its work, duties, and austerities. In receiving the unfit and unworthy, the good of religion would be neglected and endangered.

Each Institute has its own conditions and requirements for the reception of novices, and of these I need not speak as they may be clearly understood from their respective Rules and Constitutions and customs. These have the force of law, and should be faithfully observed. I may say that in this, as in every other matter on which they treat, the Rules approved by the Holy See form the particular Canon Law of each Religious Order or Congregation. Here my object is to explain only the common Law of the Church on this question as far as it concerns nuns.

It is held that the conditions prescribed by Sixtus V. for the reception and profession of novices apply only to the Religious Orders of men, and are not to be extended to nuns. This, Sixtus V. himself declares in a second constitution commencing: "*Ad Romanum Spectat.*" The same may be said of the Decrees of Clement VIII. and Urban VIII. concerning the reception of novices. These refer only to the Regular Orders and Congregations of men.

Moreover, in speaking of the conditions required by the common ecclesiastical law, it is by no means necessary to treat of them all, as some of the conditions are self-evident, and many of them are intended more for the direction of Canonists and Theologians, than for the instruction of the nuns themselves. I shall therefore confine my remarks on this subject to those conditions required for the reception of novices with which the nuns themselves have to deal.

In the first place, it is understood that those who wish to enter a convent should be persons of irreprehensible lives in the manner becoming those who are chosen as the spouses of Christ. They should be free from all vicious defects and habits that would be likely to occasion scandal or do injury to the other nuns, or to the Religious Life and observance. They should be free from any incurable or hereditary serious disease which might render them unfit for the Religious Life and unable to fulfil the duties of their state.

For the guidance of the postulants, as well as for the nuns, the following three cases deserve special attention :—

1. Children whose parents need their help and support.
2. Those whose brothers and sisters are in poverty and want.
3. Those whose parents are opposed to their entering Religion.

In regard to the first case, namely, those whose parents are in need of their help and support.

It is evident from the very instinct and law of nature itself that children should not leave their parents in this condition when they are able to help them. They are, therefore, obliged to remain in the world to support their parents if this is necessary, and if by doing so they can assist and support them. But, in the supposition, that by remaining in the world they can be of no service to their parents and have no prospect of helping them, they may, of course, leave and enter Religion, and this would be still more commendable if it should so happen that by remaining in the world they would be a burthen rather than a support to their parents.

2. Postulants are not so strictly bound to provide for their brothers and sisters in want, unless these are under the care of their parents, and are too young and weak to be of any help to their parents. In this case it would be the parents as well as the brothers and sisters that are in want as I suppose, and a daughter could not under these circumstances leave home. She should defer entering Religion for a time until the younger brothers and sisters grow up. In cases where it is only the brothers and sisters that are in want, and not the parents as well, then one is not so strictly bound to them as to the parents, and there is no obligation of deferring entrance into the Religious State for a very long time, especially if there be danger of not being able to follow one's vocation after a long delay. This, however, supposes that they are not in extreme necessity, in which case one would be obliged to remain with them as long as that necessity lasts.

3. As to the consent of parents, the answer is given by a German Canonist.\* He says that the consent of parents is required not of necessity, but through respect for them; consequently, if the consent be refused, this refusal would not in any way prevent the postulant from entering Religion, and it would not render the reception either invalid or unlawful. Clement II. teaches that children, after they have reached the years of discretion, and have the full use of their reason and free will, are independent of, and not obliged to follow the will of their parents in the choice of a state of life. Parents would sin by forcing either directly or indirectly their children to enter Religion rather than the married state or to remain in the world if they have a vocation to Religion. This is proved from the Gospel of St. Matthew,† Where the young man says to our Saviour: *Lord suffer me, first to go and bury my father.* Christ answered him: *Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.* Thus, showing that a vocation should not be neglected for worldly or family considerations. The same may also be learned from the Gospel of St. Luke,‡ where our Saviour says: *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake shall save it. For what is a man advantaged if he gain the whole world, and lose himself and cast away himself.* Hence, neither the threats, nor the prayers, nor the tears, or lamentations of parents or relations should be allowed to influence us in this matter. We have to forsake father and mother and fly to the standard of the Cross. The greatest piety in such a case is to seem cruel, and it is also in this sense, that the words of our divine Lord have to be understood: *If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethern, and sisters, yea and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple.*§ That is, we must be in that disposition of soul as to be willing to renounce and part with everything how near or dear soever it may be to us, that would keep us from following Christ. (Note in Douay Bible.)

The next question that arises is: At what age may a postulant be admitted to receive the Religious habit?

In olden times postulants might be admitted to receive the Religious habit at an early age, that is when they had completed their twelfth year. By a Decree of the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars of the 23rd of May, 1659, it was enacted that postulants should not be admitted to receive the habit of Religion until they had completed their fifteenth year. Since that time,

\* Schmalzgrueber de Rel. No. 41.

† viii. 22.

‡ ix. 24.

§ St. Luke, xiv. 26.

is the practice and law of the Church, so that to receive a postulant before that age a dispensation of the Holy See would be required. The law here referred to applies only to nuns.

Before the reception of novices two other conditions are required: 1. The consent of the Bishop or Ordinary; 2. The consent of the nuns, or those amongst them, who are entitled to a voice in the reception and profession of novices.

1. *The Consent of the Bishop or Ordinary.* This is necessary, because the reception of novices is an act of jurisdiction which a Bishop has over the convents in his diocese, or which a Regular Superior has over the Convents of nuns of his Order when these may be subject to him, as is rarely the case in recent times. Hence it belongs to the Bishop to examine the postulant beforehand either by himself or by his delegate. This examination takes place twice—first, before receiving the habit and, again, before profession. The omission of the examination would not invalidate either the reception or the profession, but superiors should do wrong by neglecting it, or admitting novices to profession without it, more especially in the case of solemn vows.

The object or purpose of this examination is to protect the rights of the novices and postulants, to understand whether their choice of a state of life has been fully considered, or, whether they may have entered Religion through force, or fear, or mistake; or, of their own free will and desire. There is a decree of

Council of Trent which forbids anyone under penalty of excommunication to force or compel another to enter the Religious State. It is to guard against this that the examination of the Bishops is prescribed, and amongst the questions to be asked are: 1. Whether the postulant desires to be a Religious through any human motive or through a real impulse of devotion and piety? 2. Whether her resolution to enter that state is free and spontaneous or whether she has been forced or deceived into it by others.

2. *The Consent of the Nuns.* The consent of the nuns who according to the Rules have a *voice* or *vote* in the admission of novices is also required. Between the convent and the novice a contract is entered into which is binding in its way and which establishes mutual obligations, and hence the consent of both parties is required, that of the nuns and that of the postulant or novice. This is of so much importance, that, as a general rule, neither the Bishop or the Superior can lawfully admit a subject to the habit or to profession when the nuns, or the majority of them, are opposed to it. That is, when the novice does not get the number of votes in her favour which are required by the Rules.

In a case where the Superior is unwilling, and the Chapter is in favour of the subject, she may be admitted and ought to be, but, with the consent of the Bishop or Prelate; because in this, as in all other matters belonging to the Chapter, the Superior has no more power than the other nuns who have a *voice* in it; and, as in the case, when one or other of the nuns would be against the admission of a novice, the reception or profession may take place lawfully and validly, provided the required number of votes are favourable, so the same rule would apply even in the case of a Superior being against it. She should submit to the decision of the Chapter in this matter.

It is the more probable opinion that a nun would sin grievously by voting against a worthy subject without a just cause, because it would be a grave violation of charity towards one's neighbour, and it would also be against the good of the Institute and Religion to expel from it or to prevent a worthy and deserving subject from entering it. With greater reason this may be said to apply to the profession. The novice has at the end of her novitiate acquired a certain right to profession unless she has proved herself unworthy of it, and to interfere with that right without sufficient reason would be a sin against justice as well as against charity.

A postulant once rejected by the Chapter may be afterwards admitted by the same Chapter, which can be again assembled for this purpose and should be when new reasons or causes supervene or are shown for altering the decision of the former Chapter; and, on the other hand, a novice admitted by the votes of the Chapter, may at another meeting of the Chapter be rejected when, as said before, new reasons are assigned for changing the former decision.

In regard to enclosed Orders and those that have solemn vows, the number of subjects to be admitted into the community is determined by the Bishop according to the means of support and accommodation which the convent may have, and it is not lawful to admit more than that number, unless, of course, with a sufficient dowry and the Bishop's permission. This has to be observed so that the convent may not be encumbered or reduced to a state of want or inconvenience injurious to its other members. And in some Institutes, such as the Carmelites, the number to be admitted into each convent is determined by the Rules and this number should not be exceeded.

In cases, however, where with the permission of the Bishop or the S. Congregation a nun more than the appointed number is admitted, she remains always one over and above and does not

count in the admission of other subjects in such a way that the full number may always be admitted independently of that one.

The postulant at her profession usually changes her name and receives a new name of some saint, and she is afterwards called "Sister," not "Mrs." or "Dame" or "Madame," except where these titles are retained by custom.

Here I subjoin a list of questions on which postulants may be interrogated—1. Who are her parents? 2. What is her country? 3. What her conduct and previous life? 4. Whether she has ever been convicted of any serious crime in a court of justice? 5. Whether she is burthened with debts and unable to pay them? 6. Whether she is responsible for any temporal administration likely to cause any future inconvenience or trouble? 7. Whether she enters Religion through human motives, or through motives of devotion and piety? 8. Whether the determination to enter Religion is free, spontaneous, and entirely of her own accord.

To these may be added the following questions in connection with the natural law or the particular statutes of various Institutes: Whether her parents are Catholics? whether she was ever married or is engaged to be married? whether she is in a good state of health, both of body and mind? whether she suffers from any contagious disease? whether she is of Jewish or heretical and schismatical parentage? All these questions are for the guidance of superiors in admitting novices, and not for the canonical examination by the Bishop.

As to the formula of questions to be asked by the Bishop or his delegate before the reception and profession of nuns, St. Pius V. prohibits any other questions to be asked except those prescribed by the Council of Trent, namely, whether she is forced into Religion or deceived, and whether she knows what she is doing. *An coacta, an seducta, an sciat quod agat.* The Ordinary or his delegate are not to ask any more questions, and the postulant is not obliged to answer any others, as far as the canonical examination is concerned. These may, of course, be put in any other form of words, but whatever is asked should be in direct reference to those three things.

This canonical examination is not, strictly speaking, obligatory as regards those Institutes in which only simple vows are taken. The Bishop may, however, in the exercise of his ordinary jurisdiction require it, and since the Holy See prescribes it as a secure means of finding out the minds of postulants who enter Orders with solemn vows, so it may be considered also a secure means of

\* Bouix. de jure Reg. P. 4. c. 4.



knowing the mind and intention of all other postulants who wish to become nuns even in convents where only simple vows are taken. Hence it is by custom established in all convents, and is prescribed by the statutes of many Religious Congregations. The examination in all cases should be made by the Bishop or his Vicar-General, or a priest with delegated authority from the Bishop or Vicar-General. It should be made before the reception of the habit and before the profession, and in the examination the form prescribed by Pius V. should be faithfully observed. A ten days' retreat or of spiritual exercises is prescribed both before the reception and the profession, as also for professed nuns once a year. Encycl., S. C., E. E et R. R., G. Oct. 1682.

The ten days, according to the canonical computation of them, would be made up of the day on which the retreat begins and the day it finishes and the eight intervening days. "During the time of this retreat the postulant, or novice, should consider that the time approaches when she is to put off for ever the secular dress and put on the habit of Religion, which means to be clothed as a spouse of Jesus Christ. She should know that it will profit little to wear the habit of Religion unless the spirit and the heart be well disposed. The exterior garments represent that which should be in the interior of the soul. It would be deceitful and acting a lie if what is represented exteriorly does not really exist within. Her first care, therefore, should be to lay aside and despoil herself of any interior vicious habits she may have acquired in the world, and then to clothe her soul with the holy virtues becoming her state. The evil habits to be removed are chiefly vanity, the desire to be seen and admired, the love of one's own convenience and comfort, play, pastime, the seeking to be liked and loved by others, the habit of following her own will and her own judgment. The virtues with which she should clothe herself are : humility, prayer, mortification, poverty, subjection, and dependence in all things on the will of her Superiors. In a word, she should endeavour to put on all the virtues that belong to a spouse of Jesus Christ ; Who, although, being in the splendour of His glory, wished to conceal His majesty under the veil of human weakness, to be born in poverty, to live despised and finally to die on the ignominious tree of the Cross ; Who being Lord of all, wished, nevertheless, to subject Himself becoming obedient to death even to the death of the Cross. He should be her example and pattern. On His life and sufferings she should meditate, especially during the days of the spiritual exercises, that she may be a pleasing offering to Him on the day of her reception, that day which she

should spend with Him in the interior of her soul held, as it were, bound by love at the feet of His crucifix." (*La Divina Parainfante* by Fr. Dominic.)

Speaking of the reception of postulants, St. Francis de Sales says: "Nothing is so destructive to Orders as the want of care which is used in examining the spirit of those who throw themselves into the cloister. People say he is of a good house, he has a good head; but they forget that he will with difficulty submit to religious discipline. Before admitting them one should represent to them the true mortification and submission which Religion demands, and not dwell so temptingly on the numerous spiritual consolations."\*

In regard to souls with some imperfections, yet with a good religious spirit, he advises that they be received and borne with. He says: "If we would only receive souls with whom there was no trouble, Orders of Religion would be of scarcely any service to our neighbours, since these souls would almost everywhere do well"† He also teaches that the qualification for the Religious Life is not strength of mind but innocence and humility.

"When Sisters have a good heart and a good desire, it matters not if they have not that great ardour of resolution. Ardour sometimes comes from the natural disposition of the soul as sometimes indifference does also; and God well knows how to engraft His grace on both one and the other in the orchard of religion."‡

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## CHAPTER VI.

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### ON THE NOVITIATE.

The Canon Law of the Church requires at least a year's Novitiate before Profession in all Religious Institutes. In many Institutes, however, two years' Novitiate are required by their approved rules.

The Novitiate begins on the day of taking the habit, or when the postulant begins to be incorporated with the Community, and to bear the duties and austerities of the Religious life with the other members of the Community.

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\* Letters. Bk I. No. 13. † Letters. Bk. II. No. 18.

‡ Letters. Bk. III. No. 30.

The following propositions taken from Bouix (*de jure Regularium*) contain all that need be said regarding the duration of Novitiate, the place, and the habit to be worn. These propositions were made for and apply to the Religious Orders of Men, and for those with solemn vows; but they apply also to those with simple vows when the particular rules approved by the Holy See prescribe what is here laid down by the laws of the Church. And they may serve as a guide for Religious Orders of Women, and are obligatory on them only when prescribed by their approved Rules.

1. It is certain that a year's Novitiate is required from the words of the Council of Trent: "Let no one be admitted to Profession who has not been a year in Religion after receiving the habit."—Sess. 25, c. 15.

2. The Novitiate should not be prolonged beyond the time appointed or prescribed. "When the time of Novitiate is finished let the Superiors either admit the Novices to Profession or send them away."

3. The year of Novitiate should be complete to the moment, so that if a quarter of an hour of it were wanting the Profession would be invalid.

4. The Novitiate year should be computed from the moment of taking the habit, or (in case the reception of a distinct habit in a Religious Congregation is not required), from the moment of entering upon the Novitiate.

5. The Novitiate year should be continuous; hence, for example, if one should go out into the world after six months of the Novitiate are passed, and then after a time return and go through the other six months, it would not be considered as forming the year's Novitiate, and the Profession, if made in this case, would be invalid.

6. The continuity of the Novitiate is interrupted by the Novice leaving the Convent or Monastery, even for one moment, with the intention of not returning. Then if she should repent and return she must commence the Novitiate over again. But if a Novice, retaining the habit, should leave the Convent for a short time, the Novitiate is not considered interrupted.

7. If a Novice, with the permission of the Superior, should remain some time, even six months, out of the Convent, the Novitiate would not be considered interrupted, so as to invalidate the profession, according to the saying: "He is considered present who is absent with the leave of the Superiors." The Novitiate is not said to be interrupted if a Novice is absent from

the Convent through a just cause, and with leave of the Superior according to the opinion adopted by the S. Congregation.\*

8. Likewise the continuity is not wanting if the Novice should: be sick in bed ten months out of the twelve.

These laws respecting the Novitiate were made for Religious Orders whose subjects make profession of solemn vows, and they have reference therefore primarily to the validity of a solemn profession. They may, however, serve as a guide to all Religious bodies, and even these Institutes whose members profess only simple vows should observe them, inasmuch as they make known the mind of the Church, and the care with which the year of probation for Novices should be observed. When the above conditions are prescribed by Rules, approved by the Holy See, they are thereby binding whether the vows be simple or solemn, and must be faithfully observed.

Some questions regarding the above propositions may be here explained.

1. Whether the time of probation may be prolonged for some just cause? It would appear that it cannot; for the Council of Trent† states that when the term of Novitiate is finished, the Superiors should admit to profession Novices who are worthy of being admitted, and those who are not worthy of profession should be sent away. It is, however, said by some that this decree does not mean, that for a just and reasonable cause the time of Novitiate may not be prolonged; and the S. Congregation‡ signifies that the words "*finito tempore*," "the time of Novitiate being finished," should be taken in a moral sense and with some latitude, or when no cause for prolonging the Novitiate exists.

However this may be in practice the prolongation is often admitted. It is not always possible in the case of Nuns for the Bishop to make arrangements for the reception of the vows of profession exactly at the time when the Novices are ready to make their vows; and other reasons may exist to necessitate delay; and when these things happen it would be hard and unjust to send away the Novice because through these and similar reasons she cannot be at once professed. It would also be nearly impossible to have recourse to the Apostolic See for every delay of this kind.

The term of Novitiate, however, should not be prolonged without some such cause, and never according to the arbitrary

\*Tom. 4. Thesaus. resol. in indice. P. 397. edit. Urbn. 1740. †Sess. 25, cap. 16.

‡ Ex collect Card. Bellar. ad c. 15 de regul. Sess. 25.

will of Superiors alone; and in the case where it may be judged that a Novice who is not deemed worthy of profession after the usual term of Novitiate, may be worthy in a short time, then the prolongation should not be longer than six months; and even in such a case it is better to have the permission of the Holy See, or at least the consent of the Bishop, unless provision is made in the Rules for such a prolongation.

If a novice be judged unworthy of profession after the usual term of the Novitiate is finished, she may of course be allowed to go through a second Novitiate in case she may desire it, or not wish to return to the world.

2. Are Novices bound to the regular observance?

They are not bound in justice to the regular observance, because they are not yet incorporated with or bound to the Religious Institute, and they are not yet subject directly and *per se* to its laws. As, however, they are now making an experiment, as it were, in that state of life, they should certainly observe its Rules, that they may prove whether or not afterwards they may be able to keep them, which is the end of their embracing this particular kind of life. Likewise, they should keep the regular observance, in order not to give scandal or bad example to others. A Novice who would be indifferent or negligent in this respect could not be said to be faithful to her vocation or to God's grace.

3. Whether a Novice having entered a convent, "*ficto animo*," that is, without a real intention of becoming a Nun, and should go through her Novitiate in that state of mind, and then at the end of it *really* desire to be professed, would have to make her Novitiate or any part of it over again? She is not obliged to do so. For the Novitiate is accomplished by fact rather than by intention. The Novitiate is ordained for the purpose that the Novice should practise and experience the kind of life to be led, and that Religion should learn her qualities and dispositions: and all this may be effected irrespective of the intention, and, therefore, in the case supposed there is no need of repeating the Novitiate. For the same reason it is said that the Novitiate may not be repeated when the profession has to be ratified, which may have been invalid either through defect of age or liberty, or any other cause. In this case, however, the Novitiate already made should be approved of as sufficient by Superiors.

4. When there are a number of Novices to be professed at the same time, which should be admitted first to profession and take precedence of the others?

Precedence is to be given to that Novice who first received the habit, because she is the first who has completed the Novitiate, which commences from the moment of receiving the habit.

5. Whether a Novice so delicate in health that in the judgment of physicians the austerities of the Religious state would notably shorten her life, is obliged to abandon the Religious state?

Some hold that, in this case, she would be obliged to leave, because it is not lawful to shorten one's life. It is, however, more commonly taught that she may remain and be professed. Because the obligation of preserving one's life extends only to avoiding dangers when there is no reasonable cause for incurring them; but when there is a reasonable and just cause, one may expose her life to such dangers, especially when the dangers to life are only remote and doubtful.

Thus, for example, one may expose her life for the spiritual good of her neighbour, and why, therefore, for so reasonable and notable a cause as her own spiritual good and salvation may not a Novice undertake the duties of the Religious state, even at the risk of her life? Especially, as I suppose, in the present case, when the danger is not inevitable. It may happen, and it often does happen, that in course of time, the inconveniences and difficulties become less burthensome and the delicate become strong and able for the duties of the Religious observance.

6. Does a Novice sin by leaving Religion and returning to the world?

If there be a just cause, she does not sin, because it was for this the Novitiate was instituted, namely that the Novice might learn to know the Religious life and that Religion might know her; and if they do not suit each other, then, of course, she may leave and return to the world.

To leave through levity or weariness of the state or through some worldly and insufficient reason would, according to Sanchez, be a venial sin; and then we have to consider the danger to which the soul is exposed by abandoning the Religious life to which God has called her, and by proving faithless to His vocation.

7. May Novices be professed in the hour of death or when in danger of death before they have completed the term of their Novitiate?

They may if they be sixteen years of age, according to a special privilege granted by S. Pius V. to the Nuns of St. Dominic in which all other Nuns who are entitled to the communication of

privileges participate. This profession is allowed, in order that the dying Novice may gain the indulgences and other spiritual favours of the Professed Sisters. The consent of the Convent is not required for this profession. If the Novice recovers her health, that profession becomes null and void, and she will have to be professed again in the usual manner.

I pass over what regards the place of Novitiate, as it is not applicable to many Convents in these countries. The strict law of the Church in this matter applies only to Italy and the adjoining islands. It is, however, understood that Religious Institutes established under one Superior General and who have various provinces and provincials should have a Novitiate House. This is the usual practice, and if it be ordained by their approved Rules, the Novices, according to the Spirit of the Church, should receive the habit in that Novitiate House, and should be professed there. But it is not essential that they should spend the whole intervening time in that house, if the Superiors for a just reason should require them in another house for a time. The time spent in this manner, in another house, with the permission of the Superior, does not interrupt the Novitiate, but counts as part of it, and the Novice should return for profession to the Novitiate House.

In regard to the Religious habit it is required by the Council of Trent that the year of Novitiate should begin after having received the Religious habit. This supposes that the Religious receive and wear during the Novitiate the Religious dress or habit. And the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in a Decree of the 17th April, 1602, declared expressly that the Novitiate cannot be made in the secular dress.

This is the common law of the Church. It may, however, be that in some Institutes approved by the Church there is no special Religious habit in use. The Jesuits, for example. It is, however, not necessary that the Novices should wear a habit distinct from the professed Nuns. But in this as in other things of the kind, the particular customs and Rules of each particular Institute should be observed.

Here note that the Religious habit is sufficient for all the Scapulars and the indulgences attached to them in those Institutes approved by the Church who enjoy the communication of privileges. The Novice may be invested in the Scapulars, but she need not wear them, as the Religious habit suffices.

I may here conclude by remarking that the Novices enjoy the same privileges as the professed Nuns, namely, *privilegia canonis* and *fori* wherever these are acknowledged to be in force.

They also enjoy all the Religious privileges, because, they form a part or are members of the entire body (though not yet incorporated with it by vow) and therefore they communicate in all its privileges; and, if they bear the burthens of the Religious state it is right that they should also enjoy its advantages and privileges.

They may gain a plenary indulgence on the day of their reception, and also on the day of profession having previously confessed and received Holy Communion, and during their novitiate they may gain the same privileges as the professed monks.

We omit to speak of the privileges which the various Religious Orders have obtained for their Novices for in regard to these, their explanation and nature is to be understood from the customs and Rules of each Institute.

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## CHAPTER VII.

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### THE NOVITIATE—(*Continued*).

OF TEMPORAL AFFAIRS—THE RENUNCIATION TO BE MADE BY NOVICES OF THEIR TEMPORAL POSSESSIONS, AND THE DOWRY OF NOVICES.

#### I. THE RENUNCIATION.

It may be useful to give here the directions of the Council of Trent\* in regard to the disposition of temporal goods before profession. They are not obligatory on all, but they may serve as directions to all, in cases where Novices who are wealthy and whose property enter a Convent.

The Council of Trent declares that no renunciation or obligation in regard to temporal things made by Novices, even if confirmed by oath, in favour of any pious object whatever, is of any avail, unless with the permission of the Bishop or his Vicar-General, and made within the two months immediately preceding the profession; and such renunciation can have no effect until the profession is made. A renunciation otherwise made, even by

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\* Sess. 25, ch. 26.



one who renounces this favour, is nevertheless null and void. The Council had in view in making this regulation, to provide for and protect the liberty of the Novice, and therefore under its prohibition are included all those temporal renunciatiōns and obligations which might so bind and influence the Novice as to prevent her leaving and returning to the world, should she during her Novitiate desire to do so. By renouncing her temporalities through indiscreet fervour, or any other human influence, she might thus deprive herself of a home or means of support in the world. Hence, as a protection for her, all contracts of a lucrative kind, donations and onerous obligations, &c., are forbidden during her Novitiate, except at the time mentioned by the Council of Trent.

Ordinary contracts, however, of buying and selling, in which she receives as much as she gives, wills, testaments, &c., are not forbidden, because by them the patrimony or property is not diminished, and the liberty of the Novice in regard to her Religious profession is not affected. Any onerous contract that would make it difficult for the Novice to leave Religion is the object of the Decree of the Council: contracts that do not interfere with the liberty of the profession are not included in the prohibition.

A renunciation made before entering Religion is valid, as far as the law of the Church is concerned (of course I do not speak here of the requirements of the civil law); because the person who makes the renunciation is then a secular, and has all the rights of a secular person to renounce her worldly goods if she likes to do so, and in favour of whomsoever and whatsoever she chooses. The prohibition only affects the Novice and the time of Novitiate. The renunciation here referred to, even when made within two months of profession, will have no effect if the Novice does not make her profession, or if she should die before having done so, and the same is to be said in cases where the profession through some cause or other may be invalid.

The prohibition does not prevent the Novice from making, with due permission, donations in the ordinary way to the Convent, or to others, provided they be not very large, and of such a nature as to place an obstacle in the way of leaving.

Parents also may make offerings and donations to the Convents where their daughters are Nuns, but the Council of Trent forbids them to make these donations out of the goods or property of the Novices.

The renunciation should not be made until two months

before the day of profession, and, if the Novitiate be prolonged by virtue of dispensation or through some other cause, the renunciation may be made always two months before the regular time of making the profession; for example, if the Novitiate be for twelve months, the renunciation may be made any time after ten months of it are passed. If by Pontifical dispensation, the profession be anticipated, the renunciation may be made on the day of profession or the day before it; and a Novice in danger of death, may also make her renunciation before the profession which by privilege she is allowed to make at such a time. If she recover afterwards, the renunciation made under such circumstances and before the usual Canonical time is of no avail.

According to the more common opinion, a Novice may, before her profession, revoke the renunciation already made and make another.

It is necessary to have the permission of the Bishop, or one who has episcopal jurisdiction over the Convent, for this renunciation; and although it is not necessary, it is, however, advisable to have this permission in writing, as it might be afterwards required to prove the act of renunciation. These provisions of the Council of Trent apply to all Novices in Convents where solemn vows are taken and not alone to Novices under sixteen years of age as some have thought; because, as I have already stated, the object of the Council was to protect the liberty of the Novices, lest they should, in any way, be obliged to remain in Religion through the difficulty they might meet with in recovering their property in case they should leave the Convent and return to the world, and this reason applies to those over as well as to those under sixteen years of age.

In Congregations, however, where only simple vows are professed, Novices may validly make donations and renunciations without observing the form here prescribed by the Council of Trent, as those prescriptions of the Council are understood to apply only to Communities with solemn vows. At the same time, we may learn from these the spirit of the Church; and how, in all renunciations of this kind, the liberty of the Novice in regard to her profession should be carefully protected.

When Novices leave before profession, all the temporal things which they brought with them into Religion should be restored to them, as well as the gifts which they may have bestowed on the Convent. If the religious habit should have been purchased at their own expense, the habit itself need not be given to Novices when they leave, but its value should. On the other hand, Novices

who return to the world should pay to the Convent all the expenses of their support and education, etc., during the time of their residence in the Convent. This should be done according to the agreement made with the Superiors of the Convent or according to the usual custom.

2. The *Dowry* of Novices, or the portion or fortune which they bring to the Convent.

The question is first asked: Whether, without simony, a dowry may be received by Convents from their subjects? Most certainly it can. As in marriage it is not simoniacal to receive a fortune, because it is received, not inasmuch as matrimony is a Sacrament, but inasmuch as it is a contract which brings with it its burthens and responsibilities which cannot be maintained without temporal means. It is, therefore, quite lawful and right that both parties should contribute their share to this purpose, namely, for the support and maintenance of themselves and the household; in the same sense, the giving and taking of a dowry or fortune in the spiritual espousals is not simoniacal, because it is not received under the consideration or for the reason that the profession is a special consecration to the service of God, but inasmuch as it is a species of contract by virtue of which the Convent takes upon itself to provide for all the temporal wants of its subjects. Wherefore, although the Religious state, inasmuch as it is spiritual, cannot be sold or given in return for any temporal thing, nevertheless, in so far as it is a contract, it needs temporal aid; and, therefore, it is but just and reasonable that subjects on entering should give some temporal assistance to the Convent which has to keep them and support them for the rest of their lives. By a dowry, then, is meant: "a certain sum of money appointed by lawful Superiors to be given to a Convent for the support and maintenance of a Nun who makes her profession in it."

It was thought by some that a very wealthy Convent or Monastery could not receive a *dowry* from its members. But the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, considering that Convents cannot long subsist without the help of dowries, and the great and unexpected calamities that may occur, or the extraordinary expenses that may be necessary by which even wealthy Convents may be reduced to a state of penury and want, sanctions that even the more wealthy Convents may receive dowries from their subjects, that thus they may be the more secure against misfortunes and accidents. Some say that Choir Sisters should not, as a rule, be received without dowries, whilst

Lay Sisters may, on account of the need or necessity of the Convent, and the hard duties and labours which Lay Sisters have to perform.\*

Bouix, speaking on this point, gives us the following doctrinal teaching. The necessity of a dowry should not, he says, be understood as applying to a Convent that is very wealthy, and to a postulant who in every other respect is a worthy subject but without means. In this case, he says, the Convent not only can but ought to admit her without a dowry, and to reject her for this reason alone would occasion scandal. For, as is supposed, the Convent is rich enough, and in this case to refuse for want of a dowry a good and worthy subject would be attributed to avarice. And, in truth, what other motive can be assigned for such refusal? The subject is in every way suitable and worthy although poor; the Convent is rich and wealthy, and able without any danger of inconvenience or want to support her and the others. Why, then, should a dowry be required? Is it that by accumulating wealth and superfluities it may be able to contribute to pious works? But what work can be more pious than to confer the benefit of the Religious state on a poor young girl who is worthy and who has a vocation. It appears, therefore, from this author that no other motive for this refusal can be assigned on the part of the Convent than cupidity or avarice, which would certainly occasion scandal.

He confirms his opinion by quoting from the *Thesaurus Resolutionum* † "It seems the more common and received opinion that *real* simony is committed when an agreement is made to give a dowry to a Monastery, whether rich or poor, as the price of entering Religion, or the price of profession. But when an agreement is made to give a dowry for the support of the person entering or making her profession, then, if the Convent is rich, such an agreement would appear very like a species of simony or avarice; it would be otherwise if the Convent were not well off, for, in this case, such an agreement is permitted and is in accordance with the custom and tradition of the Church. He then concludes: "There is no doubt, that a Convent or Monastery, even though opulent, may receive a dowry that is freely offered, but I do not think that it can exact it, and much less do I think that it is bound to exact it."

The amount of dowry to be paid to the Convent is that which the Bishop or ecclesiastical Superior may appoint. This

\*De jure, Reg. Vol. I., page 662.

† Tom. 3, page 154, Urbini 1739.

is a matter that belongs to the Episcopal Jurisdiction, and as all Nuns in these countries are under this jurisdiction, the Bishop can fix the amount of dowry to be required and received by the Convents in his diocese. He may also, for just reasons, in some cases allow a Novice to be received on a less amount than the usual dowry, even without the knowledge of the Nuns and against their will, provided always that there be sufficient means for keeping the Community in the proper manner. This does not apply to Religious Institutes whose approved rules leave this and other temporal matters in the power of their own Superiors, general or provincial, as the case may be.

Here it may be useful to state some of the old regulations of the Canon Law on the subject of the dowries of Nuns. I give them not as having binding force now, but to serve as directions to enable others to judge and act rightly in this matter. They have been modified in many things according to the customs of various Institutes in various places, and on a question of this nature the customs and circumstances of different countries have to be taken into consideration.

In olden-times the Canon Law required: 1. That the dowry should be paid in money, and not in immoveables, such as landed or house property, and the like. 2. That after the Novice's reception it should not be left in the hands of her relatives, but given in deposit to some trustworthy person to be paid by him to the Convent at the time appointed. 3. It should not be paid into the Convent even as a deposit until after the Nun's profession. 4. If the Novice should die, it is to be given back to the heirs-at-law. 5. After profession the money should be paid to the Convent. 6. The dowries of those who are above the number appointed to be received, and who may have paid a double or treble amount should be invested; but the dowries of the others may, with the permission of the ecclesiastical Superior, be applied to the common and ordinary needs of the Convent.

In regard to Convents of Nuns where solemn vows are not taken, the following rules are laid down by Bouix.\* 1. Even with these Nuns it is not simoniacal to receive and require dowries from their subjects. 2. What has been said of wealthy Convents may be applied also to these when they happen to be wealthy. 3. It belongs to the Bishop to determine the amount of dowry to be required, unless the approved rules of the Institute should make some provision for the internal management of temporali-

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\*Vol. I, page 663.

ties and the dowry. 4. The regulations as to its being given to another and placed as a deposit, do not apply to these Convents. Hence in them the particulars have to be regulated by the advice and direction of the Ordinary, according to the circumstance of time and place, and the custom or usual practice of the Institute. In addition to these rules, it may be said that as to the Convents in these countries whose members teach our Catholic public schools that a "certificate" should be considered equivalent to a dowry; and young, well educated, and talented postulants who are soon able to obtain "certificates," and who are able from the beginning to give valuable help in teaching a school, might be received into any of our teaching Convents without any other dowry than the expenses of their Novitiate, or for a very small amount. Because their work in the schools where Government grants are obtained would be valuable and sufficient for their maintenance, which is the chief reason why a dowry is required.

On the subject of the dowry, there is a further question, namely, whether the Convent is entitled to the dowry of a Novice who dies within the time of probation and makes her profession at the hour of death by virtue of the Indult of Pius V. ? In this case it is not entitled to it, because the Indult is granted only in favour of the Novice who at death may receive all the privileges and indulgences granted to the professed Nuns at that hour. And it is not granted for the purpose that the Convent may receive her dowry or other temporal goods according to the declaration of the S. Cong. of the Council.\* The Sovereign Pontiff intended only the spiritual advantage of the Novice, and he did not intend to interfere with the rights of others, and therefore they can receive all the Novice's worldly goods who have a just claim and title to them. If, however, the profession, in danger of death, be made after the full term of Novitiate is completed the Convent is entitled to the dowry. And if the dying Novice should make a will in favour of the Convent, the will should be held good, and the Convent could receive the legacy and what is willed to it, and there is no reason why it should not.

The question is also asked whether Nuns who by virtue of a dispensation from their simple vows leave the Convent can claim their dowry?

They can claim it and also all that they brought with them into the Convent, and these have to be returned to them.

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\*Die 13, Nov. 1627.

It is, however, in accordance with justice and right reason that the Convent should retain a portion of the dowry according to a fair estimate for the expense of maintaining the Nun during the time of her residence in the Convent, unless this be compensated for in some other way, such as the interest of her money, her great usefulness during the time in some particular branch of science or education, or some other duty.

In the case of solemn vows and solemn profession, the entire dominion over the Nun's dowry is invested in the Convent; and, therefore, when a Nun leaves, or goes of her own accord to another Convent, she cannot claim her dowry or any portion of it, or any income coming from it.

Some theologians, however, hold that as the dowry was given for the support of the Nun, and as an offering for her livelihood, it should follow her whithersoever she goeth, and it should be transferred to any other Convent into which she may enter.\* This is a matter of an exceptional kind, and so serious that when the case occurs I think it should be referred for its decision to the Bishop or to the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars. Understand well that I speak of a case of *solemn vows* and *solemn profession*.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

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### THE NOVITIATE (CONTINUED): ITS SPIRITUAL OBLIGATIONS.

The Novice at her reception is clothed in the Religious habit, a habit different from that she wore in the world. She should, however, constantly bear in mind that the love of God is not attached to garments or the external habit, but to virtue. She should therefore, study the religious virtues with which her soul should be clothed and adorned. It may, therefore, be useful to give her some instructions on the virtues suitable for her present state.

The fundamental rule for the Novice is to assimilate herself with all her strength to the example of her spouse, Jesus Christ. He is the model and exemplar for all, in whatever condition or state they may find themselves, and especially for Religious who leave all to follow him. Novices, as a rule, are but children in the spiritual life, and they should, therefore, take the Infant

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\* Card. Petra ad Const. 16 Eugenii iv. Sect. Unica, No. 5.

Jesus as their model, and it should be their earnest endeavour during their Novitiate to render themselves like Him, and like Him as a child.

They have not to be content with admiring and loving Him, but they should strive to imitate Him. Let them look upon and regard that Divine Image and conform themselves to it. From Him they may learn in the first place *Humility*. See how much Jesus has humbled Himself for us. He has hidden the splendour of His Divinity under the veil of our humanity. He further concealed His humanity itself, inasmuch as he desired to be born in a wretched stable, hidden from all the world, not known and not cared for by his people. In imitation of Him the Novice should seek to be humble, despised, and hidden from the eyes of the world, not caring to be seen, and much less admired by anyone. It should be a pleasure to her to occupy the lowest and most abject place in the Convent. She should love to be forgotten and considered good for nothing. How much does not this lesson contain? This is the first foundation-stone of all perfection. If this stone be not well placed, all the industry and labour expended in perfection will be useless. If by impossibility one were raised to the third heaven, the fall would be all the greater into the deepest abyss for the want of the necessary support, the foundation of holy humility.

Father Dominic of the Mother of God in His *Divina Parainfusa*, describes in his own simple, quaint way how a Novice fails in humility. Our Blessed Lady is represented by him as speaking to Philotea, the Novice, thus:—

“I notice still in you a certain study to be neatly dressed and to appear well before the eyes of all in your conduct in order to be liked. And what is this? Vanity, a desire to be noticed, or at least not to be hidden amongst your companions. For this there is such care in washing your face and hands (not that this is not right, but the motive may not be right), and in brushing away the slightest stain of dust from your habit. It is true you do not now look in the glass as much as you used, but when you pass a window or glass door you stop to admire yourself a little.

“There is another thing which you should endeavour to correct. You are becoming too much affected. You wish to appear too clever, too graceful, and this is a sign of lightness. There appears also a certain affectation in your speech, using words looked out for and prepared, with a certain nice inflection of the voice, which savours not a little of secularism.”

There is also another kind of vanity, which may be called spiri-



tual vanity, worse than corporal vanity, that is the desire to display a spirit of prayer, of union with God. Into this a great many young Religious fall. In the beginning our Saviour, having compassion on their weakness, favours them much in the holy exercise of prayer, making them feel the sweetness of devotion, which no one who has not experienced it can understand. On this subject F. Dominic thus admonishes Philotea: "My child, do not be curious to know what does not belong to you; know that God deals with every one according to their condition, with the strong he deals strongly and with the weak tenderly. . . . Now that you are weak, Jesus deals tenderly with you. He now makes you taste heavenly sweetness in order to draw away your heart from all earthly attachments, and I wish to tell you how you become vain because of this sweetness in devotion. Wherefore you remain in prayer, with the head bent down, making certain gestures and motions, whence warning is given to those present that you are elevated to sublime things. You send forth from the heart certain gasping sighs, whence it may be known that you are languishing with divine love. You utter certain little exclamations which would be much better made in the heart, keeping the tongue silent. Tears occasionally flow from your eyes; you are far from concealing them, you like them to be seen by those who are near you, and to exhibit them, as holy relics are shown, for the veneration of others. You display sometimes certain shakes and shiverings by which you attract the attention of those who chant or pray with you; when you go to communion you squeeze yourself up in such a way as to attract notice, wishing to signify how you embrace and press Jesus to you. Sometimes you remain with your gaze fixed on heaven that all may know that you are as a generous eagle, with your gaze always on that divine sun whose rays always envelope you. When you leave the choir you advance with mysterious gravity, that all may know you to be a kind of a new Moses, descending from the mount after treating and conversing for forty days alone with God. When you go into the refectory you appear weary at the sight of food, so that it may be known that you have partaken of other food more acceptable and savoury than that before you. In recreation afterwards you speak in mystery, and desire to become a guide and teacher of the spirit before you become even a disciple in the way of the spiritual life. Behold what spiritual vanity is."

There is yet one point more to be told. "You often think yourself better than your companions, that you are more recol-

lected than they, that you pray better and love God more. If you see anyone during the time of holy prayer yawn, you say in your heart, 'Poor creature, how distracted!' If you see one very recollected, then a certain thought or feeling of envy occurs to you: you would wish to be alone in enjoying the divine favours. If you see one performing some external acts of mortification you immediately desire to surpass her; you at once go to the Novice Mistress or the Confessor to obtain permission to do something more than she does, not so much through the pure motive of virtue as that it may be known that you are the best and most fervent Novice in the Convent. . . . How unlike the Infant Jesus. He thought only of hiding himself, you only think of appearing and being seen. Love to be hidden, love to be unknown, if you wish to resemble your Heavenly Spouse. Do not wish to manifest and publish the favours and graces He gives you, otherwise you may be robbed of them. That which passes between yourself and your loving Saviour let no one know, unless when necessary for the sake of spiritual direction."

And even in seeking that spiritual direction from the Confessor let it be, says F. Dominic, under the following conditions:—"1. That in the Confessor you may never take into account *who he is*, but only whom he represents. He represents Jesus, and therefore what you say to him is as if said to Christ. 2. That you manifest to him the divine favours, not for the sake of display, but solely in order to be enlightened and directed in the right path of virtue, and therefore when you have learned once how to regulate yourself in this or that circumstance, it is not necessary every time to recount the same things, but only when some new circumstance arises that may require new advice and direction. 3. When you wish to speak to the Confessor about those things do so as simply as possible; tell in a few words your difficulty, or what may have happened to you, and the fewer words you use the better will the thing be understood. Remember well this advice, and observe it throughout your Religious life."

The teaching of F. Dominic is clear in regard to the faults against humility, to which the Religious Soul is subject.

Let us now proceed to explain the other virtues which the Novice has to learn to practise and cultivate, during her Novitiate.

It is said that Novices are not yet, strictly speaking, bound to the rules and the vows of Religion, inasmuch as they are not yet full Religious, and they have not yet taken their vows. It would, however, be very displeasing in the sight of God, were they by

becoming Theologians to neglect rules and vows for this reason. It is true indeed, that they have not yet made their vows, but if during the Novitiate they do not punctually observe both rules and vows, what kind of Novitiate will theirs be? What is the Novitiate? It is a probation or time of trial or experiment, because during it they have to test whether they may be able to observe the manner of life and the rules and vows which they are afterwards to profess. A good Novice who wishes to make a true trial of the Religious Life, should observe faithfully and in all points during her Novitiate, the vows she intends to make, and the rules according to which she intends to live.

1. *Chastity*.—The Novice in regard to chastity, has no further obligation than a simple lay person. A greater abundance of grace and a more perfect knowledge of her duties and of her vocation might render the sin more grievous, but it would not change its species, and she would not be obliged to declare in confession the circumstance of her present position.

2. *Poverty*.—In regard to poverty, if there is a question of her own personal goods, she retains the same power over them as she did before entering the Convent, except that she should now conform to the Rule and spirit of the Institute. In regard to the goods of the Convent, she cannot appropriate them as they are only given for her use, and she can only apply them to that for which they are given, according to the usage of the Convent.

I here wish to refer again to the *Divina Paraninfa* for instructions for the Novice in regard to poverty. Our Blessed Lady is represented as speaking to Philotea the Novice concerning it:—

“I have then proposed to you as the model of your Novitiate your Spouse the Infant Jesus. So far I have spoken to you of the manner of imitating His profound humility. I remind you that without this everything else would be useless. Now I must add that humility is not the only virtue taught you by the Infant Jesus, there are also others equally necessary for you, and first; Poverty. Behold my child your spouse! He is the Father of all, and see His extreme poverty. He is born in a stable, placed in swaddling clothes in a wretched manger without any comfort. Behold how He trembles with cold, languishes through want, and has no other food but that which I minister to him. Look then and see the miseries which Jesus together with myself endured, and learn therefrom to bear patiently some of the inconveniences of your state of life. Be ashamed to seek comfort and delicacies when you see your Spouse, who might have chosen for Himself the most sumptuous palaces, having a poor neglected stable for

his first dwelling-place . . . Learn to love that poverty, so much abhorred by the world and so much desired by the Saint of Saints. Whilst you contemplate Jesus in the stable you should not desire a palace—when you think of Him lying in the straw in the manger, you should not desire to take your rest in a soft, comfortable bed. Choose rather the poorest things in the house and consider yourself fortunate when it happens that your cell is uncomfortable, and when you have to suffer any small privations either in food or clothing.”

3. *Obedience.*—In regard to obedience the Novice is not, strictly speaking, bound by the command of the Superior, or by the Rule; for this obligation in regard to obedience arises from the vow of obedience and the profession, and under neither of these titles is the Novice bound. But if her disobedience would be calculated to give scandal to her companions, if her conduct would be likely to introduce relaxations in the observance of Rule, and be to the injury of regular discipline, the natural law would oblige her to obey. And although her sin could not be against the vow which she has not taken, it would be, in the cases supposed, a sin against charity. Besides this, by the fact of her entering the novitiate, and the end she proposes to herself, there is a kind of tacit engagement to obey the rules of the house in which she lives and the Superior who presides over it. The good order of the house requires this, and the edification of her neighbour makes it a duty—this is the condition on which she has been received, and it is the means necessary for the Novice to prove her vocation and to train her in those virtues and obligations which she must afterwards practise and fulfil as a Religious. It is for this reason that the Novice is obliged to submit to the penalties imposed upon her for the violation of Rule. The good of the community requires this, and she is thought to have engaged herself to this on entering the Novitiate.\*

On obedience, F. Dominic represents Our Blessed Lady speaking to the Novice in the following manner:—

“Behold my Child, the Infant Jesus. He, although a tender Infant, was filled with heavenly wisdom, the same which regulates the course of the heavens. Admire, then, his obedience. If I place Him in the manger there He remains without showing the least sign of displeasure. If I take Him in my arms it is the same. If I carry Him about, either to the right or to the left, it makes no difference. He comes with me.—What a beautiful

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\* Ita Gautrelet, *Traite de l'etat Relig.*

model of obedience is this for you, my child. Thus should you, in imitation of Him, allow yourself to be treated by your superiors; without saying a word you should allow those who hold the place of God in your regard to dispose of you as they please. As Jesus, your Spouse, was obedient to me, who am so much His inferior, should you not be obedient to her who is your superior?

"You say that you obey because of the good grace and nice manners of her who commands. In that case you lose all the merit of obedience, which should never be given for the love of the creature, but purely and entirely for the love of God. What does it matter whether the person who commands has a good or agreeable manner or not? It should be enough for you that God, for whose sake you obey, is most amiable and worthy of your loving obedience. You should disregard, my child, or rather despise, that silliness which makes you attend to the personal qualities of your Superior, who is only an instrument or guide to show you the will of God. Receive, then, this divine will and seek no other. . . . Obey, then, with all simplicity when you hear the voice of the Superior, thinking that you hear the voice of Jesus Himself, and go quickly to do that which is commanded, saying in your heart, 'My Jesus, for the love of Thee I wish to do that which is commanded me.' Whilst engaged in doing it think that Jesus is near you and sees how you do it, and this will enable you to do it willingly, entirely and perseveringly. Although Superiors may not see you, yet Jesus always beholds you. My child, I recommend to you this obedience. It is the sure way of reaching that perfection which your divine Saviour desires you to possess. He, for love of you, became obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross, and, therefore, for His sake obey always, obey in everything, and obey everyone.

"It is true that the obedience which is vowed obliges you to obey only those who are your Superiors, and who have the right and power to command, and even these are to be obeyed by virtue of the vow, only in as far as their power extends. This is true as to the obligation of obedience as far as the vow is concerned, but neither I nor my divine Son would wish to see you always measuring out exactly the extent of your obligation. We would rather wish to see you endeavouring to aim at that which is of the greater perfection, that may render you the more pleasing and acceptable before God. Now, it is certain that amongst the many things which may render you pleasing and acceptable to Him,

the principal is to be docile and condescending through the love of Him, not only to superiors but also to equals and even to inferiors, subjecting your will to that of others, and never endeavouring to make others subject their wills to yours. . . . This you may understand to be said of all things lawful, honest, and becoming, for if they should be otherwise then you ought not to obey. Thus, for example, suppose some one outside, or even in the Convent, were to ask you to do something which is prohibited by the Rule or by the Superiors, or in any way contrary to your state, you should not do it. It would be false obedience inasmuch, as it would be disobedience to, and contrary to the will of, your divine Spouse."

Let us turn again to the Infant Jesus and learn one more lesson from Him before concluding this Chapter.

Mary is thus represented in the work already quoted as speaking to the soul:—

"Would you know what Jesus did as a child? He increased not only in years but also in wisdom and grace before God and men. And behold here what you should do. You should increase and advance in wisdom and grace. Understand that you are still only a child, you think as a child, and you think of nothing but your own pleasure and satisfaction. . . . It is true that at present you care nothing for worldly pleasures because you find pleasures more pure, more noble, and more estimable in treating with Jesus, who appears to you always with roses and flowers. In this you have changed the object of your self-love but you have not relinquished it. You seek Jesus not so much for His love or with the desire of pleasing Him, as through the desire you have of finding in Him your own satisfaction. You seek more the gifts than the Giver. Remember that the true science of the saints is not learned amongst roses, but rather in the midst of thorns. It is not learned on Thabor but on Calvary. You are now a great lover of Thabor but not of Calvary."

One or two further lessons are given to the Novice. "You stand at the foot of the Cross but you are not on the Cross transfixed with Jesus. You should know what a difference there is between standing at the foot of the Cross and being crucified. But the day will come when you will be crucified with Jesus, but not yet a while, because at present you are not capable of this crucifixion. Before being crucified with Christ you must carry your Cross with Him, you must drink gall with Him, you must be despoiled of everything with Him, that is, you must carry your

Cross amidst the continual mortification of your passions, and you must drink the gall of humiliation and aridity. These aridities you do not know yet, but the time will come when you will know and experience them. You are to be divested not only of external things, not only of earthly consolations, but also of those spiritual consolations which you now so abundantly enjoy. The time will come when you will find no consolation either from heaven or from earth, and then your crucifixion will take place."

For the comfort of the Novice it is said "Jesus will not depart from you. He will remain with you. In the midst of darkness he will be near to you, but you will not be able either to see Him or to feel His sweet presence. Do not have any doubt about this. He is faithful, and will never permit anyone to be tempted above her strength. In the meantime, I have wished to let you know these things that you may be prepared for them—that you may know the dangers which may hinder you from attaining that perfection which a true spouse of Christ ought to have. You must grow, as you are now but as a child just born. Increase, then, as Jesus, your Divine Model, increased in wisdom and grace."

Let these lessons of virtue suffice for the present; the same virtues here referred to will be treated more fully in the course of the work. I have only given this view of them that they may be useful for Novices at the commencement of their Religious lives to serve them as a guide in acquiring the spirit of their state.

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## CHAPTER IX.

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### ON THE PROFESSION OF NUNS.

Besides the free consent of the subject the Council of Trent\* requires for the validity of a Religious profession that she should have completed her sixteenth year of age and a year's uninterrupted novitiate. Otherwise the profession would be invalid and would result in no obligation, and be without effect both in the eyes of the Church and in conscience.

There is only one case in which the profession made within the year's novitiate would be valid, that referred to in a former chapter, namely, in the case of danger of death, according to the privilege granted by S. Pius V.

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\* Sess. 25, C. 15.

The invalidity of a Religious profession may therefore arise from many causes affecting either the free consent of the will, or the other conditions which the Council of Trent requires.

1. *Grave fear* would interfere with the freedom of profession. Fear of such a kind as would influence a sensible and prudent man in an affair of importance so as to prevent his free choice or action. In judging of the nature of this fear one must take into account the person affected by it, whether she is strong-minded or the opposite, for this is a matter that should be considered *subjectively* rather than *objectively*. This is true even of reverential fear caused by the will of parents or guardians, especially if it be accompanied with strong persuasions, threats, hatred, or importunate commands, often reiterated, on account of which a young person dare not contradict or act against her parents and relatives.

Some even hold that a profession would be null and void if the nuns were compelled by grave fear to receive a Novice and admit her to profession; for the profession is of the nature of a contract binding both parties, so that the liberty should be preserved on both sides, namely, on the part of the Novice to be professed, and on the part of those who admit her to profession. Suarez does not agree with this opinion, and as it is a question of positive law, it ought not to be extended beyond its obvious and literal meaning, which only affects the freedom of the subject.

2. In like manner the profession would be invalid through a grave *error*, or deceit, or through ignorance of the essential nature of the Religious life, (*Substantialia religionis*), for example, if the Novice should be professed thinking that she was not binding herself for life, or that the Order was not so severe, and if in this case, its severity is very much above her strength, ignorance excludes the will of being professed according to the Latin axiom, "Nihil volutum quin præcognitum" "nothing is wished for which is not known, or the unknown is not desired."

3. *Anger* also would cause an invalid profession if it were of such a grave nature as to disturb the mind and blind the judgment of reason, and thus prevent the deliberation requisite for such a serious contract. In this case the will is not perfectly free. Much less is the profession valid if the nun has no intention of binding herself, because the act does not oblige beyond what is intended. However, I need scarcely say that there would be sin in this case, and before the Church such a nun could be obliged to her duties and vows, and to make a second profession.

4. The profession would also be invalid by the non-observance



of some particular constitution of the Institute that by virtue of the Rule invalidates the profession, or is required for its validity, especially if the constitutions be approved by the Pope. For since by these, the power of receiving subjects to profession otherwise than is ordained is taken away, so the profession itself is null and without effect. For example, in some Religious Orders, to conceal some serious, incurable disease would invalidate the profession.

Here it may be asked—In case of doubt as to the validity of the profession what is to be held or taught? It is to be held as valid, because in this case Religion is the possessor, and is therefore entitled to the benefit of the doubt, and is to be favoured. Wherefore, Suarez and others teach that a nun doubtful as to the validity of her profession would be bound to ratify it.

In regard to ratifying a profession, the following questions arise:—

1st. Whether a nun certain of the nullity of her profession and is unable to prove it is bound to ratify it? Many with Sanchez hold that she is not, especially if it has not been through her own fault that the profession is invalid; and since in reality she is still free, she should not be obliged to take upon herself the heavy yoke of Religion, which on account of its great perfection, demands above all things perfect freedom of will in those who desire to take upon themselves its obligations.

Neither is she to be compelled to it on account of the votes or suffrages which as a professed Sister in the eyes of the community she is called upon to give, or by reason of the aliment or support she receives. As to the suffrages and votes, she ought to abstain from these as often as she can do so conveniently; but if she cannot do so without scandal, then she may vote with the others even in the election of an Abbess. To this she has a presumed right and title by reason of her public profession and the common error, for all consider her, as is here supposed, a validly professed nun.

As to the aliment, &c., received from the convent, this is easily compensated for either by the work which she does or the income of her dowry; and even if the convent suffer a little, it is not so much as to compel a nun to take upon herself a burthen so arduous and heavy as the obligation of profession.

According to the more probable opinion, the same is to be held in the case where a nun's profession is invalid through her own fault (except when she retains wilfully her intention of not binding, as above). In this case, though she commits sin in causing the

invalidity of the profession, yet, the unwilling at the time of profession are not professed and should not be compelled to make their profession; and this holds good according to the teaching of many, even when there is no hope of her being able to leave the convent without scandal, or in any lawful way to effect her escape from Religion. Many authors however hold, and it is the more reasonable opinion, that when there is no hope of remedy she had better make her profession.

A nun invalidly professed, if she remain in the convent should keep the Rule. She is not bound to this by reason of her profession which is invalid, but through charity in order to avoid giving scandal. She is looked upon as a true Religious, and therefore her transgressions contrary to the regular observance, would occasion scandal and surprise to the others. Where there is no danger of scandal she is not bound to the observance either of Rule or vows, except in as far as their violation would be against the law of God. She is not, however, entitled to the privilege of the canon law in the sense that one striking her would incur excommunication, because she is not a Religious but a lay person.

2. What is required in order to ratify or make valid an invalid profession?

The free consent of the nun is required, that is, knowing her profession to be invalid, she freely wishes to ratify it and make it valid. She does not require again the consent of the nuns, because the first consent is supposed to remain, and because the Pope in this case for the sake of peace, and for the good of Religion, as the head of all Religious Orders, accepts this profession in the name of Religion. Neither is it necessary that she should make a second Novitiate; for since she received the habit she has had experience of the Religious life, and Religion has had an opportunity of knowing her, and of pronouncing in her favour at her public admission and profession, which is the object of the Novitiate; and one thus professed may, with a safe conscience, retain the place and the privileges already possessed in the eyes of the Church.

3. Now comes the question.—To whom does it belong to admit nuns to profession?

It belongs to the convent or monastery which is represented by the nuns who have a vote in this matter, as has been said when treating of the reception of postulants. The profession is a contract binding both parties; and therefore the consent, not only of the novice, but also that of the nuns is required. It belongs to

them, not only to admit to the reception of the habit, but that which is of more importance, to the profession. And this is a matter of such weight, that should the Bishop or Prelate command the nuns against their will to admit a novice to profession, they may appeal against his command to higher Superiors, as declared by the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars.\*

A Novice who is excluded by the nuns without sufficient cause, may as is evident (since she is the most interested party in respect to her profession, and her unjust rejection is a notable injury) appeal to higher Superiors, and her appeal should be heard. For the S. Congregation on the 2nd of October, 1648, declared that the nuns could not reject a Novice from her profession without cause, and in this case the Bishop can interfere and admit the Novice to profession; because it belongs to higher Superiors to correct the errors of those subject to them, especially when their mistake involves a grave injury to a third party. It is, however, advisable and also useful to secure the future peace and happiness of the Novice, that the Bishop should first admonish the chapter of nuns to admit the Novice unjustly rejected. And if the nuns are contumacious and persist in their refusal the S. Congregation should be communicated with, that it may apply a suitable remedy to the convent and to the nuns.

4. May a Novice who has been ill the whole time of her Novitiate be admitted to profession? She may, because a Novice is not bound to all the austerities of a Religious Life *in specie*, it is enough if she be able to keep them *in genere*, by persevering during the Novitiate in obedience to all the directions of her superiors. It is, however, advisable and by some rules commanded that a Novice suffering from a dangerous malady, be sent away that she may recover her health at her own home. At the same time, the profession of a Novice who through ill health or old age is unable to keep all the statutes of the Rule is valid and lawful; because the obligations to the essentials of the Religious State, namely to poverty, chastity and obedience, is not affected by any corporal infirmities, but only by the infirmities and affections of the will. The other statutes of Religion are not essential, and their observance is obligatory, when a just cause does not exempt one from this obligation, and sickness or infirmity is always a just and sufficient cause of exemption or dispensation from the regular observance.

It would seem very hard to deprive all the weak and infirm of

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\* Dec. 13 Maii 1652.

the advantages of the Religious life, when they have a great desire to serve God in Religion, and when there are clear proofs that God calls them to that state. At the same time, it is often a sign of the absence of vocation, when one is physically incapable of fulfilling the ordinary duties of the Religious life. Besides the state of the Religious Observance would be weakened, and in time would be relaxed altogether if such members were admitted, and instead of being an active, living community, it would be turned into a hospital or a home of the "Little Sisters of the Poor," that is, if this teaching were generally known and acted upon amongst the infirm and old, who may desire a quiet resting-place in their old age, or great attention and care in their infirmities.

To be a choir Sister in Religious Orders, where they are obliged to recite the canonical hours, it is necessary that the Novice should know how to read so as to be able to discharge her obligation. No other standard of education is required by Canon Law.

As has been said of the reception, it is necessary also, before profession, that the will of the Novice be examined into by the Bishop or Vicar-General or Delegate, and for this reason the Superiors should give due notice to the authorities, when the time of making the profession is approaching. The Council of Trent directs that the notice be given a month before the time in Religious Congregations, in which solemn vows are taken.

It belongs to the Bishop or one deputed by him to receive the profession of the Novices, because this is an act of jurisdiction which resides in the Bishop in respect to the convents of his Diocese. A nun thus validly professed, may on the day of her profession gain a plenary indulgence. St. Thomas teaches that if she were to die immediately after making her profession, she would go straight to heaven, and some others hold, that consequent on this profession, a nun each time she renews her profession, or sincerely and piously rejoices over it, and is prepared if she had not made it already to make it there and then, would gain the same indulgence and the same spiritual advantages.

All simple vows, real, personal and mixed, are relaxed or commuted into the vows of Religion (if they be solemn), and this commutation does not require any intention on the part of the nun making her profession. This does not hold good "in real vows in a matter that affects the utility of a third person, when accepted by that third person, because by the acceptance a right is acquired by that third person, and therefore it cannot be com-

muted to the injury of this person ; it is otherwise when it is not accepted, because then the right is not acquired.”\*

5. One question more may be asked. What sin is it to be sorry for having made a Religious profession ?

It is not of itself a mortal sin, provided the Religious retains the mind and will to fulfil what she has promised. She is not, however, excused from venial sin, because to be sorry for so good an act which was voluntarily made, is against the dictates at least of reason, and would be against the gratitude due to God for so great a benefit as that of the Religious profession.

I conclude this chapter from the “*Divina Parainfance*,” where Our Blessed Lady speaks to the Novice on the day of her Profession.

“Behold then, my child, you have arrived at the happy time when you are to be bound by the ties of love to my divine Son, your Spouse. What a happy lot is yours ! This will be for you a second Baptism in which all faults committed in the past will be cancelled, so that there will be no longer memory of them in Eternity. This is that happy moment in which you are called to celebrate your indissoluble union with Jesus, Whom from that instant you may call your Spouse, and whose company you may enjoy both in time and Eternity. Heaven rejoices in that happy moment—the choir of holy virgins unite with me in celebrating the festivity, as a loving and holy Spouse is added to those of the divine Lamb. Their sweet heavenly canticle of joy resounds in giving glory to Jesus repeating ‘The divine Lamb is worthy to receive glory, honour, and divinity. . . . Glory and honour to the Divine Majesty, glory and honour to the son of David. Glory in heaven to God and peace on earth, peace to that soul of goodwill that consecrates itself to God.’

“The Profession should be a sacrifice, and a sacrifice of a perfect holocaust. This means that all should be offered to God and nothing retained either for yourself or others, neither goods nor pleasures of any kind, neither your will nor intellect nor body nor soul, nor senses nor powers, nothing whatever should be retained, but all should be offered entirely and irrevocably to your divine Spouse. . . . You make a very great bargain indeed, because, my child, your Spouse gives Himself entirely to you without reserving anything which He does not give. He gives you His Body, His blood, His Soul, and His Divinity itself, intending that you also should give yourself to Him, and that, too, without reserve.

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\* Ita apud Cajetan de Alexandria.

"Reflect that for the future your heart is no longer your own, you should not then have any wish, but be content with what Jesus and I wish for you, which shall be manifested to you by those who hold the place of God over you. You should not then in future desire anything for yourself, either life or death, health or sickness, honour or ignominy, or anything whatsoever; one only desire you should have, namely, to fulfil always the divine will in whatever manner it may be made known to you. This comes as a consequence of your profession, from the offering you made of your heart to me, and which I, on your part, will make to my Son Jesus. Your heart is ours, it is no longer your own. Your will is no longer at your own disposal, but at my free disposal, according to the will of my divine Son."

After Profession the soul should often reflect that it is in a manner crucified. The profession is its Crucifixion, and the vows that are made are the nails which attach it firmly to the Cross.

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## CHAPTER X.

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### ON THE OBLIGATIONS OF NUNS IN REGARD TO ENCLOSURE.

It is necessary to treat this subject under two distinct headings. The first concerning Nuns with enclosure. The second, Nuns without enclosure.

#### 1st. *Nuns with Enclosure.*

All nuns who have solemn vows and live together in community are bound to observe enclosure according to the Ecclesiastical Law.

Under the name of Enclosure is included all that space in or around the convent to which free access is allowed to the nuns and prohibited to all seculars. It consists as to its limits in indivisibility in the sense that, if a nun were to go out beyond the limits, even in the least, say for one or two steps, she would break the enclosure.

The following questions regarding enclosure may be briefly answered, as it is not necessary to treat this subject at any great length, inasmuch as most of the convents of English-speaking nuns are not bound by the laws of enclosure, and those that are enclosed in Great Britain and Ireland have their own particular regulations, and ordinances in regard to it as directed by the

**Bishop or Ecclesiastical Superiors.** Because, the enclosure belongs not to the natural or divine law, but to the human positive law, and it may therefore be modified by the same authority that commands it; and it may not exist at all where its laws have not been received or enforced, or have been abrogated by custom. This, of course, does not apply in cases where nuns bind themselves by express vow to observe enclosure.

1. To whom does it belong to watch over and enforce the observance of enclosure?

It belongs to the Bishop of the Diocese where the convent is situated, and this applies to all convents, even to those that are under the jurisdiction of Regulars.\*

2. Who can give permission to enter the enclosure?

The Bishop only, who can grant it of his own authority in regard to the convents subject to him; and by delegated authority from the Holy See in regard to any other convents in his diocese if there should be any exempt from his jurisdiction. I may say, once for all, that there are no convents of nuns in these countries (that is Great Britain and Ireland, and I may also say the same of America), exempt from Episcopal Jurisdiction, so that it may not be necessary hereafter to make any distinction of this kind when speaking of the authority of Bishops over Convents.

The Vicar-General can also, by special delegation, grant the permission to enter the enclosure.

*Sede Vacante*, that is during the time the Diocese is without a Bishop, this permission may be granted by the Chapter or the Vicar Capitular, who, during the interval, succeeds to all ordinary Episcopal Jurisdiction.

This permission should be in writing as a general rule, and it should be specific, not merely general. A general permission, however, that any physician or surgeon or artificer might enter the enclosure under the usual conditions is valid, for although it may be general as regards the persons it is specific as to the nature of the permission, namely, to enter the enclosure.

3. Is it ever lawful to enter the enclosure of a Convent without leave either in word or writing?

Yes, in case of necessity, and when some great danger is imminent, that does not admit of time to go to the Bishop and obtain permission. Because a human law does not bind under a grave inconvenience. Thus, for example, if a nun is taken suddenly ill, and is in danger of death, any priest not only may but

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\* Const. Greg. V. Inscrutabil.

is bound to enter to hear her confession and give her Viaticum and Extreme Unction, for she might be dead by the time a written or unwritten permission could be obtained. In like manner in case of fire or of the house falling, or other accidents, it would be lawful to enter in order to render assistance to the inmates; and if a thief or burglar were to find his way into a Convent the police or others might enter to expel him, for, as it is evident, he cannot be allowed to remain there.

4. Who are allowed to enter Enclosed Convents, and for what reasons?

1. Bishops and Ecclesiastical Superiors may enter in order to make the Canonical Visitation of the Convent, and in case of some building to be erected or the threatening ruin or falling of a part of the Convent building they may enter the enclosure if necessary in order to understand what work may have to be done.

They may also enter in necessary, urgent, and reasonable occasions, such as those in which they would be justified in granting leave to others.

2. The physician or medical attendant may enter in all necessary cases, but should observe what is prescribed on entering with the leave of the Bishop, which permission, according to a decree of the S. Congregation,\* should be renewed every three months. The same may be said of surgeons, dentists, or others destined to attend the sick or sufferers when their work cannot be done outside the walls or grating. Notaries and civil officials may also be permitted to enter in cases of need; for example, a Novice may be dying within the enclosure, and may desire to make her will; in this case a solicitor may be permitted to enter to execute the will or take down any legal deposition.

Operatives.—Workmen may also enter who are required for the necessary work to be done within the enclosure, thus the gardener for his horticultural work, carpenters, masons, etc., where buildings are going on, and painters, etc., when decorations have to be done in the Chapel or Convent. And sometimes seculars are permitted to carry things into the Convent that are too heavy for the Nuns, or too inconvenient *e.g.*, coal, sacks of flour, etc.

4. The Confessor may enter when he has to administer the Sacraments of Penance, the Holy Eucharist, or Extreme Unction to a sick nun, and this he can do not only when the sick nun is in danger of death, but whenever according to Rule or custom the other Sisters go to Confession and Communion she may also re-

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\* 27 Martii, 1588.



ceive the Sacraments, and even oftener, and whenever she may reasonably wish for them the Confessor may enter and give them to her.

He should enter with a surplice and stole on, and wear them whilst inside the enclosure.

When a nun is dying he may enter to assist her departing soul, and he may also enter to perform the exequies or funeral service, and in this instance he may bring one or more companions with him to assist in the last office for the departed soul.

5. It is held by some that when there are no Lay Sisters secular servants may be brought in to do the menial work of the convent, as it would be too much to oblige the Choir Sisters to do all the hard work of servants, which is not imposed by their profession. This would seem to be a just cause for introducing secular servants. However, the S. Congregation would not approve of it, and it recommends in all cases that Lay Sisters rather than secular women should be kept. A secular woman may be permitted with the leave of the proper authority (in this case it would appear that the permission of the S. Congregation would be required) to attend on an old, invalid or infirm nun when no Lay Sister can be spared for this duty. When with proper permission and through necessity secular women are allowed in the convent as servants, they should not be allowed to go out and in at their pleasure, but strict care and watchfulness should be employed towards them on this point.

6. It is commonly held that kings and queens, emperors and empresses, and their children can enter enclosed convents and monasteries, without any permission being required; because these persons are not included in the ordinary dispositions of Ecclesiastical Laws of this kind, unless special mention be made of them.

7. Foundresses who are privileged to enter monasteries of men may also enter enclosed convents founded by them, according to the more probable opinion. This is not admitted by all, and the argument from comparison does not always hold good where the positive law has to be considered. A nun passing from one convent to another may on her way be received into another convent of her Order, according to some; but others deny this, and only admit it to this extent, that by the permission of the Bishop she may be received into the enclosure, if in the locality there is no hospice or suitable place where she can remain or pass the night. The first opinion seems more in accordance with reason and common sense, and what appears so much in accordance with the charity of the Religious State should not without clear and positive

proof be said to be included in the prohibition regarding enclosure.

9. When not forbidden by the rules of the Institute young ladies may be permitted to enter and board in the convent for the purpose of being educated. For the reception of pupils in this way into the convent enclosure, besides the permission of the Bishop, the consent of the chapter is also required and that of the S. Congregation.

These are the principal provisions of the common law of the Church as regards entrance into the enclosure.

Now we have to speak of the enclosure as to egress.

On this point it may be asked :—

1. For what cause or reason may a nun go out of her convent ? S. Pius V. assigns three legitimate causes, namely, *fire, contagious disease*, and an *epidemic*.

By the fire is meant that which would be so great as to imperil the lives of the inmates, should they remain in the Convent. A nun sick of a contagious disease, may be removed from the enclosure to some other suitable place, so that the other sisters may not catch the disease. If there is sufficient accommodation in the Convent to remove the danger of the contagion spreading, there would in this case, be no need or reason for taking the sick nun out of the enclosure.

By an epidemic is understood here, not an ordinary pestilential disease, but one of a malignant kind, which is easily communicated and spread, and brings with it imminent and manifest danger of death, such as cholera.

For cases similar to these mentioned, nuns may go out to obtain safety and security, for example, imminent war, a flood that would endanger the Convent or its inmates, or the falling of the building itself. It would seem to be a sufficient reason for a nun to obtain leave to go out of the Convent to another place, when she is afflicted with a disease or infirmity of so dangerous and peculiar a kind, that her life would be seriously imperilled unless she should be removed from the Convent.

In cases where egress from the Convent may be considered reasonable and necessary, if they admit of time, permission should be asked from the Bishop, who would not be justified in refusing permission when there is a just and lawful cause. When access to the Bishop is not possible, and a grave reason exists such as an unjust imprisonment, or danger to one's life if we can suppose such cases, then a nun may go out without the permission, for which she is unable as is supposed to apply.

2. May a nun go out of the enclosure in order to attend on a sick relative, or to take care of young nieces or nephews who have no one to look after them?

They cannot without the permission of the Holy See. This applies even to parents in extreme necessity, although many think that the law of nature and of charity would oblige them in this case. It would certainly oblige them to use all lawful means to help their parents in such a necessity.

When a nun is obliged to leave the enclosure and has not time to get permission, she should signify the fact to the Bishop afterwards, if she has to remain out for some time. If she should have already returned to the Convent, there is no need to acquaint the Bishop of the matter.

When a nun is lawfully out of the Convent for an approved reason, as soon as her business is finished she should return to the Convent without any unnecessary delay. This is to be understood morally, because it would not signify or be a fault to remain a day or two longer than there is need, or if on her way back she should turn aside to visit a shrine or some holy place, or some relative or friend.

3. May a nun leave her Convent in order to become an Abbess in another Convent or for a reason of this kind?

It is permissible in this case, but the Convent to which she goes should be one of the same Order as that which she leaves. This permission may also be granted to a nun that she may become Mistress of Novices or fulfil some other office of importance in another Convent of the same Order. And the permission also may be given to nuns to go and found a new Convent of the same Order, and in this case, the nun who goes for the foundation, after her work is finished, if both Convents agree, the one willing to part with her and the other willing to receive her back, she may be permitted to return to her former Convent.

A nun may also be permitted to pass from her own to a Convent of a stricter Rule and observance, but in this she must comply with all the necessary conditions, that is, the proper permission must be obtained, the Convent must be willing to receive her and some settlement should be made in regard to her dowry.

Where the custom exists Lay Sisters may be allowed to go out and quest for the benefit of the Convent with the permission of the Bishop.

Before concluding my remarks on this subject, I wish to explain that when mention is made of the permission of the Bishop and of the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in this and in

other chapters, I do not wish nuns to be mistaken or to be under any misunderstanding on the point.

The Bishops in these countries have exceptional and extra powers and faculties from the Holy See, and therefore in obtaining permissions as a general rule, application should be made to them and through them, for if it be in something of such a nature as to require the apostolic sanction, they will understand this, and if they judge it necessary they will obtain the permission required, if they cannot themselves grant it.

All that regards the grates and parlours and visits of friends and relatives are regulated by the rules and customs of each Convent, and it would be useless for me to attempt to state any full and authentic teaching concerning these matters. Many little customs have been introduced that were never contemplated by Canon Law, and when they are reasonable and approved by the Bishop, they should be respected and observed. However, in these matters, as in others, all Convents and Superiors are to be guided by the traditions and Rules of their Institute, and by the prescriptions of their Bishop, especially in all that is connected with the keeping of the Enclosure. This will suffice without any addition of their own. The grates, bolts, bars, veils, and curtains used in connection with the Enclosure are matters not clearly treated in Canon Law, and not so clearly understood by canonists as by the nuns themselves, to whom I refer all questions that may concern these things.

The penalties incurred by those who break the Enclosure.

1. The Council of Trent imposes the sentence of Excommunication on all those who enter the Enclosure of Convents without permission, or with permission obtained through force or deceit or fraud, or by assigning a false reason.

2. Those who admit or permit them to enter are also excommunicated by a Bull of Gregory VIII. *Ubi gratia*. This applies to others as well as to the Superiors who admit seculars without power to do so.

3. A nun breaking the Enclosure in going out of her Convent, without cause or permission, sins grievously and incurs the sentence of excommunication. Also those who accompany her and those who receive her, when these are accessory to her going out. To accompany her after she has left, through charity and to receive her through a motive of friendship or charity would not be wrong and is in no way forbidden. But if keeping her would prevent her from returning to the Convent, then it is forbidden.

These penalties apply only to Convents where there is the

strict Papal Enclosure, and where it is known that the Enclosure is imposed by the Bishop, according to the strict laws of the Church and under the penalties here mentioned.

NOTE.—Since the publication of the “Constitution,” “*Apostolicæ Sedis*” of Pius IX. in 1869, the penal legislation of the Church in regard to the violation of Enclosure is as follows!—

Those, of whatever condition, sex or age, who shall break the Enclosure of nuns by going into their convents without due permission; likewise, those who introduce or admit them, and nuns going out of the Enclosure without observing what is prescribed by Pius V. in the constitution *Decori*, incur excommunication, reserved to the Pope, but not in a *special manner*.

1. By *nuns* is here meant those who take *solemn vows*.

2. By *Clausura*, or *Enclosure*, is meant Papal, not Episcopal, Enclosure, or any Enclosure to which the nuns may be bound by Rule or by special vow.

The *permission*, or *legitima licentia*, need not now be *in writing*, as the constitution does not prescribe it *in writing*.

Generally speaking, the Convents in France, Belgium, Great Britain and Ireland and North America have not this *Papal Enclosure*, and therefore the Papal excommunication would not be incurred by those entering convents in these countries.

There are some nuns, like the Presentation, Loretto, and Good Shepherd Sisters, who cannot go out of their Enclosure, but can admit seculars without any kind of censure.

## CHAPTER XI.

### NUNS WITHOUT ENCLOSURE.

Many Congregations of Nuns living in community are not obliged by their Rules or by their profession to the observance of Enclosure. Such, for example, are the Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of La Sainte Union des Sacres Cœurs, Sisters of the Cross and Passion, etc., and almost all the Religious Congregations of women approved by the Church since the time of the Council of Trent.

It may be useful to say something here concerning these Institutes for the purpose of showing that although they are without Enclosure and without solemn vows, they are nevertheless

true Religious, their Institutes contain what constitutes the essence of the Religious State, and as such they are approved by the Church as true Religious States affording their members the means of sanctity and Religious perfection.

I do not speak here of Congregations that have only temporary vows, for the essence of the Religious State requires that vows be perpetual. Neither do I speak of Congregations in which the vows, although perpetual, are not, however, received in the name of the Church by one duly authorised to receive them, because it belongs to the essence of the Religious State that the person who takes her vows in Religion thereby delivers herself up to God, and this offering should be accepted in the name of the Church by one having authority to receive her vows.

The question therefore on which I here treat, refers to those Congregations in which the three essential vows of Religion are taken for life and received by the proper Ecclesiastical authority.

Congregations in which the vows are simple and perpetual and received by Ecclesiastical authority, even though they be without Enclosure, have the essence of the Religious State, and are true Religious Institutes, and their members belong to the Religious and not the Secular State.

In the first place, for the essence of the Religious State *solemn vows* are not required. Since the declaration\* of Gregory XIII. saying that the Scholastics of the Society of Jesus who take only simple vows, are truly Religious, the opinion that solemn vows are required for the state of Religion can scarcely be held and is rejected by most modern authors.

In the second place, the "Enclosure" is not necessary for the Religious State. It is prescribed not by the natural or Divine law, but only by the Ecclesiastical law, and therefore where the Church does not enjoin the observance of Enclosure, this is not obligatory, and the nuns by not observing it, do not fail in any sense in their Religious obligations. The precept of Enclosure does not extend to all Religious Institutes, and to many of them its observance would be an obstacle to their work and would prevent them from attaining the object for which they were instituted and approved in the Church.

3rdly. These Congregations have all the means of perfection required for the Religious State, namely, the profession by perpetual vows of the three Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience.

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\* See Bouix. Vol. I. page 116.

4thly. They have as I supposed above, the approbation of the Church, inasmuch as they receive her sanction as expressed in the decree or definition or rescript by which their Rules are approved.

The nuns, therefore, belonging to these Institutes are, in the true sense of the word *real Religious*, and removed from the Secular State. The world knows as well as the Church, how useful they are in their works of charity, and although they have neither Enclosure nor Solemn Vows, they are free from all those abuses which in the time of Pius V. had to be removed by the laws of Enclosure; and furthermore, these Congregations are enriched and strengthened daily by favours and privileges by which the Holy See confirms, encourages, and blesses them.

They are wanting in nothing that the state of Religion requires, and they are not in the least inferior to the state with solemn vows and Enclosure.

The rescripts of approbation given to the several Institutes may be understood according to the terms in which they are written. They are usually inserted in the copies of the Rules of each Institute, and from them we may know whether and in what manner and to what extent any particular Religious Congregation is approved by the Holy See.

This approbation of the Church, as I have elsewhere more fully explained, gives security and stability to the Institute and to its members, inasmuch as it signifies to them that in that state they have all the means of sanctity and religious perfection.

The Religious Congregations of nuns of our time are without Enclosure, not that on this account their Rule should be considered lax or their state less perfect, but in order that they may devote themselves to the pious works which belong to their Institute and their vocation, and to which the Canonical Enclosure would be an obstacle. Of these pious works some are such of their own nature, and others on account of the customs and necessities of our people and our times, that they are incompatible with strict claustral observance.

Take for example, the nuns employed in nursing the sick, serving in hospitals, visiting the poor, teaching our poor schools, and boarding schools, etc. Subject these to Enclosure, and their work becomes impossible. Hence it is with great reason that the Apostolic See sanctions these Congregations and enriches them with so many favours and blessings. It is well known and acknowledged by all, how important and how extensive is the work of these nuns throughout the whole world in the cause of

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gion, both by their example, their devotion to the sick and  
, and their teaching and training of the young, and they are  
to be deprived of any advantages which Religion can give  
in return for the sacrifices they make.

They are, therefore, *true Religious*, in the Ecclesiastical sense  
the word, they have the obligations and privileges of Religious,  
if faithful to their Rules and the spirit and work of their  
Institute, they will certainly have the reward of *true Religious*.

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**PART II.**

**THE VOWS AND THEIR OBLIGATIONS.**



## PART II.

# THE VOWS AND THEIR OBLIGATIONS.

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### CHAPTER I.

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#### ON VOWS IN GENERAL.

A vow is "a promise made to God." This definition declares that which constitutes the essence of a vow. The words that are usually added "of a better good," are given rather as the explanation of the object of the vow. St. Thomas's definition of a vow is, "a promise made to God, of a greater possible good."

In explanation of this we have to analyse the definition.

*A promise.*—Not merely a resolution or purpose, but an agreement or contract by which we take upon ourselves an obligation of doing that which we promise. This promise should be deliberate and made with the full knowledge of the nature of the thing promised and its obligation, and with full freedom of will.

*Made to God or in honour of God.*—A vow is an act of *Latria* or supreme worship, and this can be offered to God alone. Hence, promises made to the Saints are not real vows, or, if understood as such, it is because they are made to God in honour or under the protection of the Saints, in the same sense that Churches and Altars are dedicated to God under the patronage or invocation of the Saints.

*Of a better or greater good.*—That is, of something which either in itself or by reason of circumstances is better than its opposite—better than something else which is also good in its way. Thus matrimony is good, but chastity is better.\* The good

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\* A promise made which would impede a greater good would detract from the worship of God, and therefore could not be acceptable to him.

must also be possible, because no one could be bound to that which is impossible. Hence a vow, to avoid all venial sins collectively would be invalid, as this has been declared impossible by the Council of Trent, without an extraordinary grace.

Of the acts which may constitute the matter of a vow there are three kinds. 1. Those which we are already obliged to perform, such as the commandments of God and the Church. 2. Those which are only of counsel, such as poverty, chastity and obedience. 3. Those that are indifferent, such as to abstain from a certain kind of food or drink.

It follows from the above doctrine: 1. That one must have attained the use of reason and the age of discretion before making a vow. The same amount of the use of reason and discretion is required for this, as for the committal of mortal sin. 2. One ignorant of the obligation of a vow would not contract its obligation even though she might pronounce the form of the words of promise. 3. One ignorant of, or who is in error about the thing promised by vow is not bound to it. 1. When the error is about the substance of the thing, as, for example, to vow to give a chalice to a Church for the one motive that it is poor, and it happens to be rich, or to vow a chalice which you think is silver and it happens to be gold—2. Or, when the error is about circumstances in connection with the vow of such a nature that were they known beforehand the vow would not have been taken—as, for example, to vow to enter the Cistercian Order, not knowing of the perpetual abstinence from meat observed in it, which, had it been known, the vow would never have been made—or, to vow to make a pilgrimage to Loretto, thinking it only a few leagues off and it turns out to be several hundred miles away—Or, 3. When the error is about the final end of the vow, such as to promise by vow to give Titius, a poor man, an alms from the fact of his being a relation, which he is not. All these errors would render a vow null and void. In vows by which we enter the Religious State, or rather in the vows taken at a Religious profession, no error invalidates unless it be about the substance of the thing promised. Because otherwise, there would be danger to the stability of that state, and a door would be opened to continual changes and defections which would be to the injury and ruin of the entire body. Lugo says, “the reason of this is, because in those things which constitute a state of its own nature firm and irrevocable such as the Religious State, and the state of matrimony, the will according to the nature of the thing, consents and accommodates itself without condition or restriction, but absolutely and independently of all conditions,

cept those that belong or appertain to the substance of the contract. If other conditions would invalidate matrimony or a religious profession, both matrimony and profession would be exposed to great uncertainty which would not be in accordance with the nature and the stability of the Religious State and the obligation of the vows of Religion." And Sanchez says: "By dependence on circumstances of this kind it would follow that many professions and many marriages might be considered null, which would be a grave injury to the state and occasion grave scandal.

A vow made through unjust and grave fear from an external cause would be invalid, and this would certainly invalidate a Religious profession, as has been expressly declared by the Church. This would not be the case if the fear were to proceed from sickness, or danger, or some such visitation of divine providence.

Gury thus sums up the foregoing doctrine.

For the validity of a vow it is required:—

1. That it be a *promise made to God alone*, and not merely to one of the Saints, or to any creature whatever.
2. That there be the *intention of making a vow* and of obliging oneself under pain of sin, and not a mere resolution.
3. *A deliberate will*, such as is required for a perfect human act, or for taking upon oneself a serious obligation.
4. *Of a better good*. That is a thing that it is better to do than to omit.

In further explanation of the nature of a vow I give the following two rules of Benedict XIV. :—

I. Rule. "A vow is a deliberate and voluntary promise made to God of a better good. A promise is distinguished from a resolution in this, that a resolution is the will of doing or omitting anything; a promise is the will of doing or omitting anything as a duty or an obligation, and, therefore a promise adds to a resolution the will of obliging oneself. A resolution, no matter how firm and deliberate it may be, does not include the will of obliging oneself, and when there is not an expressed and wished-for obligation there is no vow.

II. Rule. When the promise is made it has to be asked whether it was *deliberate*. And since deliberation is two-fold, one full and perfect, the other half and imperfect, it is to be understood that for a vow, full and perfect deliberation is required, that is, that the person making the vow must be in the full possession of her senses, she must advert to the vow and know

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1. Whether one is bound by vow who doubts whether she has  
de<sup>6</sup> vow or not? or, 2. Whether she had sufficient delibera-  
n or not?

Again, when a person is sorry for having made a vow, that is no reason for supposing that the vow is invalid. It not infrequently happens that some things which we do deliberately displease us afterwards. But in a case where one immediately after promising something to God doubts as to whether it was a promise or a resolution it is to be presumed that there was no vow. For ordinarily speaking a vow is made with a deliberation of such a nature that it can always be remembered, and it certainly cannot be forgotten or doubted immediately after it is made.

The division of vows. Vows as above explained, are: 1. Either *absolute* or *conditional*. Absolute when one promises unconditionally—as for example.—*I vow to God perpetual Chastity. Conditional*—as for example.—*I vow to enter a Religious Order if I escape death during this battle.*

The conditional vow does not oblige unless the condition be fulfilled, thus, if you promise to give a sum of money to the poor if you recover your health, if you do not recover your health you are not bound by the vow to give anything to the poor.

2. Vows are either *personal* or *real*. A *personal* vow is that which has for its object an action which can only be accomplished by the person who makes the promise, *ex. gr.* : *I vow to recite the Divine Office every day for the rest of my life*. The *real* vow is that which has for its object some extrinsic thing that may be fulfilled by another person for us, as for example : *I vow to give a silver chalice to the Church of Our Lady of Lourdes*. Thus the vows to fast, to say certain prayers, to observe poverty, chastity and obedience are *personal*, and they cannot be fulfilled by another ; but a vow to give alms is *real* because the alms may be distributed by yourself or by another. There is also this difference between these two vows, namely, that the obligation of the personal vows dies with the person who makes them ; but the obligation of *real* vows descends to one's heirs.

3. Vows again are either *explicit* or *implicit* as they are either formally expressed in words or contained in some other vow. Thus, the vow of chastity that binds those in S. Orders is *implicit*, and its obligation is contracted by the fact of taking Orders without expressing the vow in words or otherwise. In some Religious Orders it is considered sufficient to make explicitly profession according to the Rules, or, to promise obedience according to the Rules, and in this the other vows are implied. In nearly all Orders, however, the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, are *explicitly* made.

4. Vows are either *perpetual* or *temporary* according as they are taken for life or only for a time. If *temporary*, at the expiration of the time specified the obligation of the vow ceases.

5. Vows may be considered as relating and made to God immediately without the intermediary of any Religious body appointed to receive them, or any authority to watch over them, and to see that they are observed in such a way that all takes place between God and the person who makes the vow. These are called *private* vows, such as the vow of chastity, sometimes made by devout persons who live in the world. But vows that are made in a Religious Institute and received by Superiors in the name of the Church, and of Religion are called the *vows of Religion*. Of these we have to speak separately, and somewhat in detail, in the following chapter.\*

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\* See Gautrelet des vœux.



*The Obligation of Vows.*—Having explained the nature of a vow and its division, we will now examine into the nature of the obligation which is imposed by a vow.

1. A vow obliges of *itself* after the manner of a law or precept of the Church; and, therefore it imposes a grave obligation in a grave matter, and only a light obligation in a light matter.

2. A vow obliges according to the intention of the person who makes it, in the case where one determines the extent of the obligation at the time of making the vow. So that you could bind yourself only to a venial sin even in a grave matter. The reason is, because a lawgiver or Superior may even, in a grave matter, oblige only under venial if he so will, and in like manner the person who takes a vow may limit its obligation to a venial sin even in a grave matter.

On the other hand, in a light matter one cannot be bound under a grave obligation, because a light matter is not of *itself* capable of a grave obligation. I say *of itself*, because a light matter may become grave either by reason of the end to be obtained, or by reason of the circumstances which accompany it, and might in this supposition bind under grievous sin. But as a general rule there is such a want of definiteness as to the end in view and the circumstances that have to be taken into consideration that it can seldom be regarded as wise or safe legislation to place under mortal sin some slight command or a matter of trifling importance. On the contrary, as Fr. Doyle states: "A matter which is absolutely light in itself is incapable of bearing the weight of an obligation, which binds under the guilt of mortal sin, and the penalty of eternal damnation, however much the legislator may wish to do so. Such a thing as this is repugnant to the goodness of God, who has never given such power to men, for it would be unto destruction rather than unto edification."\*

In the next place, it is necessary to explain what is to be regarded as grave and what as light in the matter of a vow.

That matter is grave which is ordered by the Church as binding under mortal sin, such as fasting, hearing Mass, etc.; or, which by comparison with other precepts is considered grave: or that which is notably ordained for obtaining the end of the vow or the greater glory of God.

St. Liguori gives the following conclusions on the subject of the obligation of a vow:—

1. If the matter is grave, then the vow is binding under

mortal sin; but if one should, even in this matter, wish to bind herself only under a venial sin it is more probable that she would be bound only under a venial sin. If the matter is light, no one, even though she might wish it, can bind herself under mortal sin.

2. The heir is bound by all the *real* vows of the testator, and these have to be satisfied or fulfilled before all legacies but after the just debts are paid.

3. It is quite lawful for the father of a family to make *real* vows, although in part, but only moderately, he should injure the legitimate rights of his children. But he could not do this at his death, because then he is obliged to dispose of his goods according to the requirements of the law.

4. A father cannot oblige his sons to vows made in their name, nor can a Community oblige future subjects.

5. *Personal vows* must be satisfied by the one who makes them, but *real* vows may be satisfied by another.

From what has been said in connection with the obligation of vows we must not infer that one can by her intention limit the obligation of vows taken in Religion either as to time or matter, penalty or guilt. In this the Church has herself determined and prescribed the matter of the vows and their obligation, and therefore, the sense in which they have to be made and received in Religion. The individual Religious then, who takes her vows in the sense determined by the Church, and according to the practice and Rules of the Institute is not free to modify or limit her obligations. The same is to be said of the vow of chastity attached to S. Orders and to the vows taken in all Religious Institutes. These as to their sense and obligation are not determined by the will of the individual but by the will of the Church.

I may conclude this chapter by a remark on the subject of the binding force of vows taken from the work above quoted: (Principles of Religious Life.) "Speaking in a general way we may say that every vow obliges the person who makes it to observe that which he has promised. 'If thou hast vowed anything to God,' says Ecclesiastes (v. 3). 'defer not to pay it, for it is much better not to vow than after a vow not to perform the things promised.' A similar precept is given in the Book of Deuteronomy (xxiii. 21), 'when thou hast made a vow to the Lord thy God, thou shalt not delay to pay it, because the Lord thy God will require it. And if thou delay, it shall be imputed to thee for a sin.' Again, St. Paul, speaking of such widows as had violated the vow of chastity by wishing to marry, says: 'When

they have grown wanton in Christ they will marry, having damnation because they have made void their first faith.\* But even if the Scripture did not tell us of the binding force which is in a vow, our natural reason would point out to us that it is a part of that fidelity which one man owes to another, to do that which he has promised and to pay that which he owes. And to whom does man owe more fidelity than to God, both because of God's dominion over him and of the benefits which He has bestowed upon him. To Him, therefore, especially is he bound to pay that which he has promised, and if he does not, he incurs the guilt of a breach of good faith with God. Hence the Wise Man, when giving the reason why vows made to God should be faithfully accomplished says, 'An unfaithful promise displeases Him.'†

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## CHAPTER II.

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### THE VOWS MADE IN RELIGION.

Under the name of vows made in Religion, I wish to include vows made in any Order or Congregation whose members live under a Rule, and recognise a Superior whom they are bound to obey, provided that the Order or Congregation and Rule have the approbation of the Church, at least Episcopal approbation.‡

There is this difference between vows that are made in Religion and vows that are sometimes made in the world:—

1. The latter depend entirely on the will of the person who makes them as to their matter, their duration, their nature, and their obligation. 2. They are offered to God without an intermediary who in the position of a Superior, represents Him to the minds of those who make the vows. But the vows made in Religion should:—1. be made according to the use and practice of the Religious body, and according to the sense in which they are taken by that body. 2. They should be received and verified or attested by Superiors in the name of the Order, in the name of the Church, and in the name of God Himself, Whom the Superiors in this act represent.

These vows may be different in their nature and in their

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\* 1 Tim. v. 11.

† Eccles. v. 3.

‡ Gautrelet des vœux.

effects according to the difference which distinguishes the various Orders and Congregations.

According to this difference, vows made in Religion are either *temporary or perpetual, simple or solemn.*

1. *Temporary Vows.*—These are placed in the lowest grade in Religious vows. They are vows made in certain Congregations, either for one year only, or for a certain number of years, five, or ten, as the case may be. In some Congregations the subjects take vows to bind themselves first for one year, then for three, five, or ten years, before making the perpetual vows or binding themselves for life. This is regarded, as I have said, as the lowest grade of the Religious life because it is wanting in stability, and there is not made by temporary vows that irrevocable sacrifice of oneself and one's will to God, as in the case of perpetual vows. At the same time, this arrangement through wise motives of prudence has been approved by the Church in its approbation of some Religious Congregations, and it is done in the interest both of the individual and the Congregation. It may also, in a sense, help to the merit and consolation of the Religious soul, who, when the time of her obligation expires, makes a new sacrifice by again binding herself after having recovered freedom, and this sacrifice, if not so complete as the perpetual vows and the irrevocable sacrifice, is, however, oftener repeated.

These vows, though made only for a time, nevertheless admit a Religious and incorporate her with the Congregation, and mutual relations and rights are established between her and the Congregation according to the Rule of the Institute, so that the Superiors cannot refuse to the subject the renewal of vows or the profession of perpetual vows unless the rules give them power to do so, and in so far as the rules give them power, and never without some grave and canonical reason, and in the case of nuns they should obtain the sanction of the Bishop or of the Holy See in a matter of so great importance. I am not aware of any general law or authority which gives Abbesses, or Rev. Mothers, or even Mothers-General of any Institute the power to prolong temporary vows, or of their own will to deny their subjects, when the time appointed by approved rules has expired, the renewal of their vows, or the taking of perpetual vows. In the case where a subject is not considered worthy of this, or incorrigible in her faults and a disturber of the Religious Community, then she may be proceeded against according to what is laid down regarding the expulsion or sending away of nuns. In this it may be objected that the opinion here stated is a hard doctrine, for many in time

may improve, and it is better to give them another trial than to send them away.\*

This is by no means the case. 1. For by it very many are saved the hardships and persecutions of having their vows and perpetual profession postponed, without any assigned or canonical reason. 2. Those who are not worthy of their perpetual vows after a probation of their Novitiate and a term of experience of temporary vows are not likely to become fit for the Religious life by another experiment of this kind, and are just as liable after the second and third trial to be sent into the world after spending their best days in Religion. 3. This is a question depending on positive law, and limited by it and to be judged by it; for if left to human judgments as to what is prudent and expedient in a matter of this kind, subjects would be kept in suspense and would have no fixity or security in their Religious lives. It is well, therefore, especially in this matter I think, that the Rules of the Institute be observed and that no authority or power be assumed which is not granted by them, and not exercised beyond their prescription without the authority of the Holy See.

If you ask me of what use then are temporary vows? I do not say they are useful in Religion when compared with perpetual vows. And I think the mind of the Church in approving of them is to be understood in favour of the subject, who is quite free at the term of their expiration to leave Religion or renew her vows.

*Perpetual Vows.*—These are vows taken for life. When taken in the Religious State they are either *simple* or *solemn*.

*Simple* vows, although in thought and intention perpetual as far as the person vowing is concerned, they are not always absolute and irrevocable on the part of the Congregation which receives them; so that although subjects can never of their own accord and authority break the contract entered into at profession by the perpetual and simple vows, the Congregation can reserve to itself the power for a just cause to dissolve the engagement and to grant, through Superiors or Ecclesiastical authority, dispensations from their vows to Religious who may have lost their vocation or whose conduct may be injurious to the good name and well-being of the Congregation.

2. These simple vows impose obligations according to the Rules which are professed, that is, the obligations of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience according to the Rules.

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\* See Bouix De Jure Regularium, Tom. II., page 358, et seq.

3. They make those who profess them, in an approved Order or Congregation true and real *Religious* in the evangelical sense of the word and in the eyes of the Church, and entitle them to the indulgences and privileges of Religious according to the Rules and constitutions of the Religious Institute in which they make their profession.

I extract and translate into English a declaration from the secretary of S. Congregation of the 17th July, 1858, for the solving of some doubts raised about simple vows taken in Religion.\*

1. Simple vows of which we treat will be perpetual on the part of the person making the vows.

2. The dispensation from these same simple vows is reserved to the Roman Pontiff.

3. The same simple vows can be dissolved on the part of the Order, so that when the dismissal is granted, the professed are by that very fact set free from all bonds and obligations of the said vows.

4. The faculty of dismissing those professed with simple vows, is reserved to the *Apostolic Commissary* of the Order, with the general *Consulta* . . . the same . . . with his general *Consulta* can in extraordinary cases and especially in far-off regions or countries, sub-delegate other wise and prudent Religious, at least three in number to exercise the power of dismissal.

5. Although for the dismissal . . . no form of judgment or trial is required . . . the Superiors should however proceed with the greatest charity, prudence and with the due examination of the causes or reasons . . . No one, however, can be sent away on account of any infirmity supervening after the profession of the simple vows.

6. Those professed with simple vows participate in all the favours and privileges which the professed of the same order with solemn vows enjoy. (That is in an Order where solemn as well as simple vows are taken.)

7. I omit as it does not apply to nuns.†

8. The years of profession which in the said Order are required that one may enjoy the right of active and *passive voice* and for admission to offices, are to be computed from the day of

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Craisson No. 2690.

† 7. Superiores regulares ad quos spectat, concedere poterint hujusmodi professis litteras dimissorias dumtaxat, ad iam Tonsuram et ad Ordines Minores, servatis servandis.

And now it might be added, ad omnes Ordines et Minores et Majores servatis servandis

profession of the simple vows, and the professed with simple vows have the same right of suffrage as the solemnly professed.

9. The professed with simple vows can retain the *Dominium radicale* of their goods, but their administration is entirely interdicted to them and their fruits and *uses*. They should moreover, before their profession of the simple vows, cede for the time of their Religious lives the administration of their temporalities to anyone they may please, and even to the Order itself, if they think well to do so.

10th and 11th do not apply here, or they cannot be applied to nuns.\*

These declarations are not made in the form of a general decree constituting a common law, they are useful however in explaining the law in all the points here referred to, and may apply as solutions to any doubts or questions on those points regarding the simple vows taken in Religion. †

When it is said above that simple vows are not always absolute and irrevocable on the part of the Congregation that receives them, it is not to be understood that it can dissolve them at will.

Bouix gives two questions, and answers them in a manner that may explain this matter more fully. ‡

1. Whether in those Congregations which have only simple vows but with a true Religious State, a Religious can be sent away without a just cause? It is to be answered *No*. From the very fact that in these Congregations there is the essence of the Religious State, there is also the giving or the *traditio* of himself by the Religious and the receiving *acceptatio*, on the part of the Congregation, and therefore there is a contract obligatory on both sides by which the Religious is bound not to leave the Congregation, and the Congregation is bound not to expel him without a just cause. Hence, if a Religious is expelled without a just cause, his expulsion is not only unlawful but invalid, because the right or *jus* of remaining in the Congregation will remain with the Religious thus expelled. From this it can be further understood that the Religious expelled without a just cause can institute a process or recourse to Superior Prelates against his expulsion.

\*10. *Professi votorum Simplicium remanere debent in domibus professoriis et studiorum, et vitam communem perfectam observare.*

11. *Ad valide emittenda vota solemnia post vota simplicia, requiritur Professio expressa, et ideo Professio tacita omnino abrogata est (solummodo tamen quoad vota Solemnia).—Craisson ut supra, No. 2690.*

† Vide *Prælect. S. Sulpitii* No. 434; et Bouix. *De Curia Romana*, p. 215.

‡ *De Jure Regul.* Tom. 11, page 486.

2. Whether Religious belonging to Congregations in which only simple vows are taken, but having the essence of the Religious State, can be sent away without a cause if they themselves consent.\*

It is to be answered *No.*—Since from the hypothesis it is a true Religious State, there is the tradition by which the Religious gave himself for ever to God and to the Congregation. And by receiving him the Congregation bound itself not to dismiss him or send him away without a just cause, and the fact of his consenting or even asking is not a sufficient or just cause.

Nevertheless, if the Religious should consent, a lesser cause would be required for leaving, and the cause might be even without fault on the part of the Religious, such as an infirm state of health.

*Solemn Vows.*—The first question to be asked concerning them is, In what does the solemnity of vows consist? On this question we have different opinions.

1. There is the opinion of the Thomists, according to whom a *solemn* vow differs from a *simple* in the same way as *donation*, a gift, differs from a *promise*, and therefore they differ from the very nature of things. However, according to these, it is stated that when there is the legitimate *donation* and *acceptation* then, from the very nature of the thing the vow is solemn, it depends, however, on the Church to place certain conditions without which neither the *tradition* nor *acceptation* would be either lawful or valid; and in this way they explain the proposition of Boniface VIII. which says, "Only by the ordination of the Church is the solemnity of a vow constituted."

2. The second opinion holds that the solemnity of a vow consists in a certain benediction or consecration, and in regard to chastity, a consecration that would render the contract of marriage invalid, inasmuch as a person who is consecrated to God should not enter the matrimonial state.

3. The third opinion which seems to be the more common, and the one to be held in practice, is that the solemnity of the vow depends on the will and the determination of the Church according to the decretal, *Quoad votum* of Boniface VIII. wherein it is said, "We therefore knowing that the solemnity of a vow is established by the authority and constitution of the Church alone."

We may here therefore explain that there are two kinds of solemnities to be noted, one which Suarez calls *accidental*, and the

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\* Quæst. III apud Bouix.



other *substantial*. The *accidental* consists in the external ceremonies, blessings, consecrations, &c., which accompany the profession, and as these are observed also in the case of simple vows they add no intrinsic force or efficacy to the profession or its obligations. As to the solemnity which is called *substantial*, although theologians are not quite agreed as to its precise nature and essence, it is however certain and universally admitted, that a *solemn* vow is on the part of the subject *perpetual* and *absolute*, and on the part of the Church and of the Order it is received as *perpetual* and *absolute*, in such a way as that the Religious cannot leave the Order, and the Order cannot send away the Religious. This condition is essential and is sufficient to make the vow solemn when the Church declares the engagement irrevocable on both sides.\*

This then is the distinctive property and character of a *solemn* vow. The other qualities that are assigned are rather the effects of the solemnity of the vow than qualities constituting its nature. And the *solemnity* neither in itself or in its effects is necessary for the Religious State or for the vows of Religion, which can exist, and in reality do exist, without it. Gregory XIII. *Bull Ascendente*, says, as well as Boniface VIII., that the Church has established this solemnity.

It results however from the solemnity of vows:—

1. That they cannot be dispensed from as *simple* vows, and only the Sovereign Pontiff, in the name of the Church, can pronounce that these vows are no longer to be obligatory in a particular case, which he has done only in very rare instances.

† 2. By reason of a *solemn* vow of chastity a Religious cannot validly or licitly contract marriage, and the same solemn vow can dissolve a *matrimonium ratum*, but not *consummatum*, whilst a simple vow of chastity would make the contract of marriage illicit but not invalid.

3. The solemn vow of poverty renders the individual incapable of dominion over temporal goods, but not the community.

4. Papal Enclosure nearly always accompanies solemn vows.

The vows taken in Religion, whether *simple* or *solemn*, are the three Evangelical Counsels, *Poverty*, *Chastity*, and *Obedience*.

The state of Religion is, according to St. Liguori, "A state of the faithful tending towards the perfection of divine charity having taken the vows, or by means of the vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, and a stable manner of living in common

\* Gautrelet Traite de L'Etat Religieux.

† Konnings No. 1185.

approved by the Church, by means of the three vows of Poverty, Chastity and Obedience. Because, according to all canonists the state of Religion is not understood as complete unless in it one tends completely towards the acquisition of perfection; but, that one tend completely to the acquisition of perfection, it is required that the three Evangelical Counsels be practised, namely, *Poverty*, *Chastity*, and *Obedience*. By the practice of these three the obstacles are removed which avert men from the love of God, and attach them to creatures; these obstacles are external goods, sensible pleasures and delectations, and adhesion to one's own will and judgment. The person vowing is freed also from those solitudes which disturb the mind, divide the heart, and impede advancement in virtue by the administration of wordly goods, the care of a family, and disposal or application of one's own actions. Therefore vows should be taken about these three counsels; and it is not sufficient that they be exercised or practised without a vow, because then the State would not be permanent. It suffices that these three be vowed; because, although besides these there are many others, yet through the practice of these, by a certain moral necessity, others also are often and easily practised, as for example, by the vow of chastity one is moved to practise not only it, but other virtues connected with it, such as temperance and mortification. Likewise by the vows of poverty and obedience the soul is preserved, not only from the dangerous love of riches and independence, but also from the vain desire of honour, supereminence, and dignity.†

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### CHAPTER III.

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#### ON THE VOW OF POVERTY : ITS NATURE AND OBLIGATIONS.

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##### ON THE NATURE OF THE VOW OF POVERTY.

Poverty is the voluntary abdication of the use of proprietorship over temporal things, made by a Religious at her Profession. By this vow it would seem that not only the external act of possessing anything as her own is forbidden to the Religious, but also the internal desire or will of such possession; because when

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† Vide Craisson No. 2460 and Bouix de Regul Tom. 1, p. 37-42.

a thing is prohibited all that leads to it is likewise prohibited; since from the will one naturally proceeds to the external act, and as in this case the external act is unlawful for the Religious, so also is the internal act.

The Religious, however, would not sin by having the desire of riches under other conditions, that is, in the supposition that she had not taken the vow of poverty, because such a condition excludes the will of acting against the vow, and the desire of riches would be sinful only when it would lead the Religious into the danger of sinning against the vow. The Religious, by vowing poverty, does not abdicate all the goods of which she has the dominion or use; she does not, for example, abdicate the right of preserving her life, or the use of her members or of her bodily powers, or of the faculties of her mind, or her graces and virtues, or her fame and honour.

By the vow of poverty, external things only that are commonly known as riches and possessions, or their independent use are abdicated. These comprehend money or things of pecuniary value, or that are morally equivalent to money. An abundance of these things makes a man rich in the common acceptance of the word, and their absence makes him poor.

Four grades of poverty may here be explained.

1. The poverty by which one can neither validly nor lawfully have dominion or the right of having or using things as her own.

2. That by which, though the Religious may *validly* possess or have dominion, she cannot do so lawfully, nor can she lawfully use things as her own.

3. That by which one cannot lawfully use things as her own, although she may validly and lawfully have dominion over them, that is, when the Religious renounces the *use* of dominion or proprietorship over things, or the independent use of them. This is the poverty professed by most modern Religious Congregations.

4. The poverty by which one does not abdicate either the dominion or independent use of things, but binds herself by vow not to possess temporalities more than what is sufficient for her honest sustenance, according to some just end and standard which she prescribes to herself. Such a one only abdicates the use of superfluities. Although we can suppose a person living in the world abdicating by vow the use of superfluities only, and consider such an action very meritorious and praiseworthy, yet for Religious poverty, according to the universal practice of the Church, the third kind of poverty must be professed, that is, the

poverty that abdicates the use of proprietorship or dominion, or the free use of things independently of the will of the Superior. The *S. Pœnitentiariâ*\* gives the following answer on this question :—

“The faculty of acquiring with the free and independent power of using, enjoying, and disposing of things is entirely opposed to the substance of Religious poverty which is required by the Church.”

For the essence of the Religious state, therefore, the third species of poverty is required, and it is sufficient. This is proved (1) from the example of the ancient Religious, St. Anthony, St. Hilarion, etc. These possessed some things, made wills, etc. (2) From the approbation of the Church given to so many Religious Orders, both of men and women, who make the vow of poverty here explained. (3) It stands to reason that those who have only a dominion which is not to be exercised without the will and permission of a Superior, and who may be denied its exercise, according as the Superior may decide, are really poor, for they do not enjoy the possessions more than if they had them not. One who should have dominion over all the goods of a nation if he could not take anything to himself, or use anything for himself, is just as poor as the man who has nothing. Therefore poverty of this kind is sufficient for Religious poverty, and those who profess it are really poor in the evangelical sense.

The consequence of the vow of poverty as taken by Religious are thus given by Carriere :—

*Religious Solemnly Professed.*—1. A Religious solemnly professed cannot either validly or lawfully acquire anything in his own name or dispose of anything.

2. He cannot use or retain anything without the leave of the Superior (at least legitimately presumed).

3. He is bound to be ready in mind and will to renounce the things that he has by permission, the moment the Superior wishes.

4. A thing given for one specific purpose cannot be applied to another.

5. He cannot vindicate to himself any right over things which on his account are acquired by the Monastery, but he must regard them as common and at the free disposal of the Superior.

*Religious who profess simple vows.*—Of these, two things are to be said. 1. They can validly retain dominion over their goods

and validly acquire new things in their name, but not lawfully, except within certain limits according to the Rules of their Order. The direct dominion may lawfully be retained, but not its use, and not exercised without permission.

Carriere speaking on this subject concerning Religious with the vow of poverty in France and Belgium, and their obligations, gives the following opinion, which, I think, applies also to the state of Religion in Great Britain and Ireland and in America:—

“And much less can they lawfully dispose of things. . . . Since in Religion vows are made according to the Rules, it must be determined by them how far the vow of poverty obliges in each institute.”

2. If the simple vow should be absolute and perpetual, Religious are bound by the same laws as to the disposition of their goods and property as those with solemn vows, and are subject to all the consequences of a solemn vow above-mentioned, with the exception of the first.

II. *On the Obligation of the Vow of Poverty.*—Concerning the obligations imposed on Religious by the vow, the following may be considered:—

1. Speaking of *simple* vows, a Religious who retains dominion over temporal goods may *validly* dispose of them by will or other disposition; she cannot, however, do so lawfully without the permission of the Superior. Superiors, however, would abuse their power by compelling a Religious subject to will her property or inheritance to the Convent, or to dispose of it according to their Superior's will. Because under these circumstances the Religious should take into account the state of the community and the state of her family, and help the one and the other according to what is right and just.\* Bouix says that with the leave of the Sovereign Pontiff a professed Religious may validly and lawfully make a will.

As to Regulars who take only simple vows; if they retain direct dominion of their goods, they would unlawfully dispose of them by will or any other means, without the leave of the Superior, but *validly* according to Suarez against Molina; since they are proprietors, and this kind of disposition of goods or property is not invalidated by any law. It would seem, however, that these donations are *irritabiles*, that is, capable of being annulled, inasmuch as all Regulars, even those who take only simple vows, are subject to the *dominative power* (*potestati dominativa*) of their Superiors.†

\* Tom. II., p. 558.

† Vide Bouix, loc. cit. et Craisson de jure, etc., No. 2777-8.

Ordinarily speaking, the disposal of temporal things should be made by will before profession; and if this has not been done, and in cases where after profession property has been inherited, or in other circumstances that may make changes in property and temporalities, to avoid confusion and litigation after death, all Religious with simple vows, should be advised to have their wills made, which they may validly and lawfully do with the permission of the Superiors.

Religious with a solemn vow of poverty, cannot after profession will or dispose of temporal goods, because by such a vow a Religious renders herself incapable of dominion over such goods. When I say incapable I do not mean that by the vow of poverty a man deprives himself of the faculty of possessing temporal things, but only that the Church has attached this condition to a solemn vow of poverty, so that after taking a solemn vow a man can have no valid or lawful dominion over any temporal thing and cannot use anything as his own.

The incapacity of possessing, affects the Religious but not the Convent or Monastery\* except where by special law Monasteries are forbidden to have dominion over goods in common as in the case of the Capuchins who cannot have things even in common, and all whose property belongs to the Church of Rome or the Supreme Pontiff. They have only the use and administration of the temporalities.

2. It would not be a violation of the vow of poverty for a Religious to receive as a deposit, money from a secular to keep for a time without the permission of the Superior, inasmuch as he does not receive either the dominion or use or the administration of the money, but only the office of custodian which does not appear to be opposed to the vow of poverty.† This might be forbidden by Rule or by obedience and then it would not be lawful.

3. With regard to a Religious taking the goods of the Monastery in the matter of eating and drinking and such like small household things, Suarez says, a Religious would not break the vow of Poverty by so doing, unless the loss to the Convent be very great or in some cases when the consumption might be in some extraordinary manner or in some very expensive matter. Outside these cases, eatables, etc., are considered of small moment, even if in the course of time they should amount to some notable quantity, because these small thefts, if they can be called such, do

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\* Conc. Trid Sess. 25, cap. 3.

† Diana et alii.

not coalesce in this matter, and they do not cause much loss to the Convent or the community. And, although it may displease the Superior, she ought not to be considered unwilling to the extent of estimating it as a grave matter in regard to poverty. A Religious in the use of such things is to be considered as a child in her father's house, and to be treated as such in the same way, and on the part of parents this is not considered a grave sin in their children, though it may displease them very much. Of course it may be against Rule or an order of obedience to eat or drink out of meal time.

4. A Religious, who against the will of the Superior repeatedly takes food and drink (not for her own use), and gives them to externs, sins venially each time and thus when the amount comes to a notable quantity, then the last theft coalescing with the preceding ones becomes mortal, unless at the time there may be the intention of making restitution, or unless there be a great interval between the thefts so that they could not be said morally to coalesce. This is according to one opinion; but the second opinion denies that the last theft would be mortal by virtue of the former, for the reason that venial sins, no matter how numerous cannot become mortal, so from these light thefts which are small and venial a mortal sin cannot arise.

This second opinion does not generally hold good in a matter of justice and where it is a question of robbing our neighbour by small thefts morally united.

5. With regard to the quantity of the goods of the Monastery or Convent required to constitute a mortal sin against the vow of poverty. *Quot capita, tot sententia!* Many men! many minds! Some say that the same amount that would in a secular constitute a mortal sin of theft would suffice for a mortal sin against poverty in a Religious. Others like Rodriguez and Argonius, think that the theft of a Religious would be mortal when it would be to the amount of £1 (*duorum aureorum*)\* Others think that a notable quantity in the thefts of Religious should be determined according to the judgment of a good and prudent man taking into consideration the different circumstances of time, place and persons. Some again have estimated the amount at 2s., some at 4s., and some at 8s. or 9s. Others again compare the thefts of Religious to those of children living in their father's house, and that the quantity which would be required to constitute a mortal sin in the case of a child stealing

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\* The scutum aureum which I think is here meant would be equivalent to 3.28 francs according to Lixix, and two of them double that amount.

from its parents, would be required to constitute a mortal sin in a Religious who takes the goods of the Monastery or Convent. The same reason applies to both, for as the paternal goods are reserved for the children, so the goods of the convent are reserved for the support and use of the Religious.

From what has been said, we see that one cannot easily judge a Religious guilty of mortal sin in the matter of poverty, and that the safest way is to consider each particular case according to circumstances, the injury done, and the loss sustained.

To serve as a guide to go by in this matter, I extract the following from Bouix, who is a recent author and one of great authority on these points, and whose opinion may certainly be taken as that of a good and prudent man.

"1. If a Religious should take the goods of the monastery to consume them or to apply them to his own use, a grave matter would be to the value of twenty francs.

I have said to consume them or to apply them to his own use, because if a Religious were only to take the use of them for a time, such as a precious manuscript or book to return it to its place afterwards, the sin would not be grievous.

2. If one should give to *externs*, grave matter would seem to be to the amount of ten francs in the supposition that the Convent is neither in want or opulent.

3. To give to another Religious, grave matter would be twenty francs.

4. If one should receive an offering in the name of the Convent or of the Superior there would be no sin in this case, as it may be rightly presumed that the Superior would consent.

5. To retain secretly, or without leave, money or other things to the value of 20 francs. would be considered grave matter."\*

This seems to be a fair estimate, and may fairly apply to these countries, and, considering the circumstances of the difference of the value of things and money, it would be easier, and I think fair, to calculate by shillings instead of francs and apply the above numbers to the several cases.

6. It would be wrong for a Religious to lend or exchange the things given her for her own use without the permission of the Superior, because a Religious is only permitted the use of things, and cannot concede that use to another. She would, however, not sin grievously if she were sure that the thing lent or exchanged would be returned; and this whether a loan is made to



one of the Religious or to a Secular, for a loan is not considered grave matter against poverty.

This I consider would apply to the loan of things that are given for our sole use, such as the Religious habit and other articles of clothing. To lend books, penknives, scissors, or the like small things for a short time to another would not be a violation of the vow.

7. It would be a sin, and a grievous sin, if the matter were grave enough, to change that which is destined for the common use of the Convent into something for one's own use alone, without permission, as, for example, changing a tablecloth into a towel. To do such a thing is to exercise an act of dominion which is contrary to the vow. This is to be understood when it is appropriated from the common use, to one's own use and benefit.

8. A nun, by the fact of being deputed to some office in the Convent, requiring money, outlay, and expenses, may receive from friends and relatives all that is necessary for fulfilling that office, with the tacit and presumed will of the Superior, as shown in deputing to her that office; for if the office requires expenses, and if these are not met by the Superior, then the Religious duly appointed to an office which she is supposed to fulfil well, and with all necessary means, may receive what is required for that office; for the Superior having appointed her to it thereby is supposed to have granted all the permission needed, and for all things, without which the work cannot be done or the duties accomplished.

9. A nun is not bound to restitution for the things of the Convent which she has culpably lost, or wasted, or given away, because this would have to be made out of her own property of which she has renounced the use. Hence a Religious is not bound to work harder, or to deprive herself of necessities, or to ask and procure offerings from Seculars to pay the debt. These things would be too severe, and they are rather to be counselled than commanded. The person to whom the things are given away should be as far as possible induced to restore them to the Convent, and, if with permission and all the conditions required, a Religious should have a *peculium* or the use of private means, she should, out of these, restore to the Convent when it can be done in this manner.

10. With regard to idle Religious, and those who do not practise or fulfil the duties of their state.\* St. Thomas explains their

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\* This principally regards Religious men or monks.

position in regard to poverty:—*Si vero aliqui sint religiosi qui absque necessitate et utilitate quam afferant velint otiose de elymosynis quæ dantur pauperibus vivere, hoc est eis illicitum*, that is those who, without any necessity and without any utility either to themselves or their neighbour, or their state, wish to live idly on the alms that are given for the poor; this, St. Thomas says, is unlawful to them.

*Necessity*.—The sick and feeble come under this class.

*Utility*.—The different kinds of employment in which a Religious may be useful.

1. Manual labour.
2. Preaching the word of God.
3. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, including Prayer.
4. The study of the Scripture, Philosophy, Theology, and other useful arts and sciences.
5. Teaching, visiting the sick, etc.

It is a very grave question whether the idle, useless Religious, who does none of these things, who does not even pray, is not guilty of fraud. That is defrauding his neighbour by using what is given for Religious, and although formal fraud may not be intended on the part of the idle Religious, and benefactors understand that some will fail to observe their duties, yet there is no doubt whatever but that there is fault and sin in their conduct. Idle and lazy Religious are against holy poverty, and if not guilty of robbing their neighbour they are guilty of abusing the goods of the Monastery, and should be reminded of the just spiritual advice: "*qui non laborant neque edant*." Some have even thought of binding such as these to restitution, like soldiers and other officials who refuse to work for their pay, but the parity is denied; besides, to whom, and by what means, are they to make restitution are questions that have their weight, and carry with them such grave difficulties, that the obligation of restitution is not insisted upon, but the conduct of such Religious is pronounced by all to be guilty, unlawful, and scandalous.

II. As to the substance and essence of this vow it cannot be abrogated by custom, because its obligation is of the divine natural law against which custom cannot prevail; but, as to the circumstances under which the vow is observed, things may be altered or abrogated, because some observances are introduced by human laws either by the Founders or by the Sovereign Pontiff and they can be altered or taken away by custom like the observances of other human laws. It is commonly taught by the Doctors of the Church that to introduce a custom in the matter of poverty ten

years is required with all the other conditions of a lawful custom. Suarez and others teach that there is no time determined for a custom of this kind, but it is left to the judgment of the prudent who may extend or limit the length of time according to the nature of the thing and the frequency of the acts. The introduction of such a custom would always suppose that it is practised by all the Religious, even by those of tender consciences, and who are in other respects strict observers of Rule, and that the Superiors know of it and do not correct and contradict it when they can easily do so.

12. With regard to *Epicheia*, or presumed permission in giving and receiving things without the leave of the Superior, as it is allowed in other obligations and laws, it is allowed also in the obligation of the vow of poverty. It is more easily allowable in receiving, by which the Convent is benefited, than in giving away by which the Convent suffers loss, and in this Superiors cannot be too easily supposed to be willing. We must also take into consideration the quantity, because there is greater difficulty in presuming permission when the amount is of some serious value: and also permissions may more easily be presumed in giving to one of the Religious than in giving to externs. In matters of light moment it is always more easily admitted, such as in eatables and in articles of devotion, rosaries, medals, crosses, etc., because the consent of the Superior may easily be presumed in these things. When the express permission can be obtained there is never any reason for using the presumed permission, and it is always safer, when it is possible, to obtain the expression of the will of the Superior when we can go to her and make our request to her. This will be a security against any violation of the vow of poverty.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE VOW OF POVERTY—(Continued.)

#### THE PECULIUM, PERMISSIONS, AND GIFTS.

A *Peculium* is money or means of the kind destined for the use of a particular Religious and not for the common use of the community. Convents in which no *peculium* is admitted are said to have "common life," that is everything in common.

It is certainly unlawful for a Religious to have a *peculium* with the independent use of it.\* A *peculium* with dependent use is not incompatible with the Religious State, because one who acts and does things with permission and with dependence on the will of the Superior does not sin against the vow of poverty. And according to customs and practices, sometimes sanctioned by the Holy See *peculia* are allowed in many Monasteries (or rather were allowed) and St. Liguori says† that this is quite lawful. "All agree" he says, that in Convents where "common life" is not observed on account of poverty, or the neglect of superiors to provide necessities for their subjects, *peculia* may be allowed according to the will of the Prelate; the reason of this is, because the Council of Trent commanded "common life" to be observed by the Religious when they were not denied necessities by the Convent. But when the Religious are supplied with all things necessary, they are bound to give up their *peculia* at the will of the Superior; because the use of *peculium* is and can only be lawful with dependence, and therefore it should cease as soon as the Superiors prohibit it.

The use of *peculium* should not be introduced where the "common life" is in force.‡

2. The following are the conditions required that the *peculium* be lawfully kept and used:—

1. That it be with dependence on the will of the Superior.
- 2 That those who have its use be ready to resign it at the intimation of the Superior's will.
3. That it be applied to lawful and pious uses.
4. That it be not superfluous.
5. That it be kept in a common store-room, or in some place where the Superiors may have access to it, and not hidden under lock and key in such a way as to prevent the Superior knowing of it or obtaining it, if she should so will.

With dependence on the will of the Superior, nuns may have annuities and incomes, and may spend in pious uses money acquired or earned by their own industry. But the Council of Trent forbids them to have these things independently and irrevocably.

An annuity cannot be settled upon a particular Religious by relations or friends without the consent of Superiors, and then its use is to belong to the Monastery and not to the Religious, except as the Superiors may direct.§ The Council of Trent prohibits

\*Conc. Trid. S. 25 C. 1. † Lib. 4, No. 15. ‡ St. Liguori *ibid.*

§ This refers to *solemn* vows, I believe. There is no law that binds relations or friends not to grant annuities to individual nuns with *simple* vows. Of course, its use must always be dependent on the Superior's will.

superfluities to be conceded to Religious, and therefore the permission of the Apostolic See would be required in case of a very rich bequest or legacy.\*

Without the leave of the S. Congregation nuns could not grant or cede their incomes to their relations, but they could cede their fruit, with the permission of the Superior, provided it would not amount to a very large sum. And for ceding the fruit of future years the leave of the Holy See would be required.†

Those who have *peculia* with all the lawful conditions may give some help out of them to their poor relations, because a Religious having a "peculium" may expend it in all pious uses that are not opposed to right reason, but to help poor relations is not only not against right reason, but a work of the greatest charity, and this may be done according to their need, and according to a prudent judgment and discretion one or more times a year.

Carriere says, "Sometimes a great difficulty arises when there is question, not only of the *use* and the *usufruct*, but of the disposition of goods. If, for example, an inheritance came to a nun who has already given her dowry to the Convent is she bound to give to the Community that which is permitted by law, or can she leave the whole of it to her parents? The reason for doubting on the point is, because she cannot dispose of it except with dependence on the will of Superiors, and it is not certain how far that dependence is to be urged in the present case. We see no principle by which the right of the Community can be asserted, even to the part of those goods permitted by law (the French law limits and determines the parts in this matter). The principal things then to be taken into consideration are the state of the Community and the state of the parents, for if the Community is in want and the parents are well off, the nun would seem to be culpable who would give nothing, or only very little to the Community, and in this case the Superiors might urge her to give more. For the Convents even in that case, and much more so in cases not so favourable for the Community, the Superiors should proceed with the greatest caution and prudence lest they should render Religion odious to the Secular families or expose the nun to the greater danger of disobedience and sin."§

4. A nun cannot repudiate the goods left her by will or donation, or debt due on account of her work or industry, nor can

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\* Ferraris Monialis Art. 2 No. † Craisson No. 2761. ‡ Craisson No. 2762  
§ Carriere (Part I De objecto Justitiæ), No. 225.

she ask those offering them to give them to her relations or those outside the Convent. And this is the case because the Convent or Monastery has by Ecclesiastical law in *Solemn vows* a right to those things as well as to legacies, inheritance, bequests, &c., without any act on the part of the individual Religious to whom they may be offered, and this would be held even if the individual Religious should gainsay or refuse the bequest, &c. A nun can, however, refuse an alms or ordinary donation without breaking her vow of Poverty, because to such offerings as these the Monastery has no right as long as they are not received, and a Religious does not make a vow not to receive. She would, however, sin against Charity by refusing, in depriving the Convent of what is offered and of the help it may need. It would not be sinful if the thing offered should be something unsuitable to the Convent, or if the nun should have a good reason for refusing.

In the case of a *simple vow* of Poverty I do not know of any law entitling the Community to the goods in a case of this kind where the *Ecclesiastical Law* on the point is not admitted. It does not seem to be admitted in France. Is it admitted in these countries? The only title as far as I can discover that the Community could have would be the donation of the nun herself, and to make that donation she should get permission, and in justice it would appear that the Superiors would be obliged to give permission, and to avoid unduly influencing their subjects in cases of this kind in disposing of their property. They, of course, can always retain the direct dominion under simple vows during their lifetime, and after death the property is disposed of according to will or according to law. Hence it is advisable that every Religious should make a will before profession.

Besides, when under *simple vows*, the nun does not renounce the *direct* dominion over her goods and property, even the Ecclesiastical Law does not give the Community or Convent the right to appropriate these goods, therefore the only means I can see for the Convent to come lawfully into their possession is the *free* donation of the Religious during life or after her death by virtue of her will.

#### PERMISSIONS.

A permission or leave is the power or right of doing something lawfully and validly with dependence on the will of the Superior granting it.

It is divided into the *express*, the *tacit*, and the *interpretative* or *presumed* permission.

The *express* is that permission which is granted by word or in writing, or by some other sensible manifestation of the will of the Superior.

The *tacit* is a virtual permission contained in another, or it is founded on practice, custom, or the silence of Superiors. As in the case, when a Superior would know that a nun receives, retains, gives, consumes, or does something, and would not forbid or counsel her to the contrary when she can and ought to do so; for her silence in such a case would be considered consent, and the permission *tacit*.

The *interpretative* or *presumed* permission is the permission that would be granted if it were asked, as for example in cases where access to a Superior is not possible; then when a Religious has to act, she may interpret the will of the Superior and act accordingly.

With regard to the permission required in the matter of poverty, there is no difficulty about the *express* provided it be real and not extorted through fear or fraud. Otherwise, no permission would be of any use, and all disposition of things made by Religious would be invalid and unlawful.

It is admitted by all that the *tacit* permission is sufficient in the matter of poverty; that is, the silence of the Superiors in not prohibiting when they can easily do so. St. Liguori says that the *tacit* and *express* permission have the same value, since in both the concession of the Superior is granted.

But in regard to the *interpretative* or *presumed* permission, that is, the presuming that the Superior would consent if she were asked, S. Thomas holds that this permission is good, inasmuch as a Religious would not be exercising proprietorship in doing an action which she believes will be ratified by her Superior. Because, in order to avoid a sin against the vow of Poverty, it is sufficient to have permission of such a kind, as not to act in one's own name, but with dependence on the will of a Superior.

It is to be remarked, however, that permission should not be too easily presumed upon, there should be a certain probability of future concession on the part of the Superior. These permissions are sufficient when the nun cannot have access to the Superior, as, for example, when one is travelling without a Superior, and in other circumstances when it may be necessary to act, as the matter does not admit of time, and no other permission can be asked or obtained.

3. Three conditions are necessary in order that a Religious may safely act upon a permission:—

1. That it be voluntary, because it proceeds from that power, namely, the will, which should act freely in matters especially that involve obligations. Therefore, a permission extorted through stratagem, fear, or fraud is of no value, as the Superior is not fully free or willing in granting the permission under such circumstances.

2. That it be just, that is in things lawful and within the power of the Superior, and not to the prejudice or injury of anyone.

3. That it be revocable; otherwise it would constitute a proprietor, or give the Religious the supposed right to act as such, which would be contrary to the vow which promises to act in all things with dependence on the will of a Superior.

A permission given in order to avoid complaints and murmurings and to satisfy importunate demands would be sufficient to save the Religious from a sin against the vow of poverty; for a permission of this kind, though it may be involuntary *secundum quid*, as theologians say, is absolutely and *simpliciter* voluntary. This, however, would not exempt the Superior or subject from all fault if the thing asked and obtained should be unnecessary and superfluous.

When a just permission is asked and unjustly and unreasonably refused, the Religious is not justified in acting without it, because the vow of poverty is still binding where the matter of it is not placed outside its obligation by the necessary permission. If, however, the matter does not admit of delay, or some imminent danger be feared, then there would be room for *Epicheja*, and the reasonable interpretation of the will of a higher Superior.

In a request it is not necessary, by reason of the vow of poverty, to express the name of the person from whom we receive or to whom we give, but the Superior from some reason or other might require to know, and then the Religious should make it known.

It would certainly be a violation of the vow of poverty, both on the part of the Superior and the subject, if the one with the other's permission should retain superfluous precious things, such as gold ornaments, bracelets, jewels, etc. No permission of a Superior is valid to such an extent. The Superior is only the administrator and not the proprietor of the goods of the Monastery, hence she cannot grant superfluities of this kind, for her power does not extend to that which is unlawful. Some have thought that this would be a sin of avarice rather than a violation



of poverty, and in judging of it the quality of the Convent and the rigour of its poverty should be considered.

If we speak of ordinary superfluities and of those things that are often permitted to Religious for their use, as, for example, if one habit be sufficient for a nun and she has four, or if two be sufficient and she has six, it is thought that unless the excess be very great, she does not sin mortally because she has them, as the case here supposes, with the *express* or *tacit* permission of the Superior, and in these ordinary things it would be very difficult to decide exactly what is superfluous and what is not, unless some latitude were given in the matter. There are many things that do not seem to be really necessary, and yet they are found to be much more convenient and advantageous for the better and more effectual discharge of our duties, and if not necessary at the present time they may soon be required and be found to be necessary.

In regard to hiding things or keeping them secretly without the knowledge of Superiors, it may be well to explain that if things are hidden in order to deprive the Superior of the right over them, or lest she should deprive us of them, it would be wrong. Because this would be an exercise of proprietorship, and against the vow of poverty. But to hide them in order to escape confusion or a reprimand, or because we had no time to ask for them beforehand, and intended to do so as soon as possible, and not wishing to be found out in the possession of things without permission, or some such motive, we should not be considered as acting without permission or against poverty.

The Superiors from whom nuns should obtain permission are, after the Holy See, the Bishop, if the Convent is subject to him, or the Regular Prelate, in case of Convents exempt from Episcopal jurisdiction. Also the Superiors of the Order, the Mother-General, and Provincial, and also the Rev. Mother or local Superior of the Convent. The granting of permissions in the matter of poverty belongs to the jurisdiction of administration, and as the jurisdiction of administration resides in these Superiors, they can grant the required permissions. Permissions denied or refused by the Rev. Mother or the Abbess may be granted by the Prelate, but not *vice versâ*, because the greater power prevails over the lesser.

The permission, unless revoked, lasts until the death of the person to whom it is granted. Hence it need not be asked again from each succeeding Superior, because in law it is a favour granted "*gratia facta*," which lasts even though the Superior should die or be removed from office. This is to be under-

stood unless some statute to the contrary exists in a Religious Order.

There are various opinions (*more doctorum*) as to the amount to which the permission of the ordinary Superior can extend. Some think that Superiors can give permission to spend £10 or £15 a year. Some others say £2 or £3 a month. Others think that they can give leave to the same amount that they themselves can expend; but this question, in the opinion of many authors, may be left to the judgment of the prudent, taking into account the means of the Convent, the custom and the quality of the persons, and of the causes and reasons, etc. Also whether it is a question of things given away from the Monastery, or things received; because in expending the Monastery suffers and is deprived of its goods, and this, therefore, would require greater reason and cause to justify the expenditure.\*

#### GIFTS.

There is a Constitution of Clement VIII. moderated by a decree of Urban VIII., which forbids all Religious to bestow gifts, and those receiving gifts from Religious are bound to restitution.

It would seem that the penalties mentioned in the Constitution of the Popes against those receiving gifts are not to be applied to the case of Religious with only simple vows. Even where the general prohibition is in force there are exceptions to it. It is doubtful whether this prohibition was ever fully enforced. The censure attached to it is not now in force, and it never was extended to Religious with simple vows.† This censure is not mentioned in the Constitution *Sedis Apostolicæ*, and is no longer incurred.‡

1. Small refreshments of food and drink, and also small levotional articles, even if they be given without the consent of the Convent are not included in the prohibition.

2. In the decree of Urban VIII. it is declared that gifts "may be given by Religious of both sexes for causes or reasons of gratitude, conciliation, of benevolence, or good will, or for preserving that good will towards Religion or the Convent; and for other causes which of their own nature may contain an act of virtue or of merit. This, however, should be done moderately and discreetly, and not without the leave of the Superior, and when

\* Cajetan. De Alex. *De licentia requisita.*

† Ferraris V. Res. Cas. 14.

‡ Craisson, No. 2769.

it is required by the Rules and Constitutions or the custom of the respective Convents, the consent of the majority of the Convent or the Chapter should also be obtained.

The quantity must be judged by the circumstances of person and the causes and particular reasons in each case. From the same decree of Urban VIII. it may be shown that to offer refreshments to benefactors and protectors of the Order is not unlawful, provided they do not exceed the limits of religious moderation and order; and not only is hospitality not forbidden but it is recommended and encouraged, especially towards the poor and needy and strangers.

In regard to repasts that are given to friends and relatives on the occasion of the reception of Novices and their Profession, let them follow the usual custom of the Convent, and, whilst avoiding all singularity, let them be careful not to admit or introduce novelties or abuses in this respect.

The cases in which Religious may give away things granted them for their use are summarized by Craisson\* as follows:—

1. They can help a person in great poverty when access cannot be had to the Superior.

2. It is lawful for them to bestow moderate alms when absent from the Convent or Monastery, and even when in the Convent they can give something to eat to the poor who come to beg because in these things the Superior is not unwilling.

3. It is also permitted to them to make small donations to their friends and relatives in token of gratitude or friendship, or for conciliating one to respect and love towards Religion.

In this case it would be safe always to have permission. At the same time, I am quoting the doctrine laid down by Craisson for which he quotes St. Liguori.†

4. Also, too, even without leave, a Religious may give remunerative gifts out of the things granted for her own use, yes, and give even more than she receives to the amount of fourth part in excess, because gratitude requires that more be given than received.

5. It is more probable that a Religious cannot give away what she has spared by living parsimoniously and depriving herself of the necessaries given for her use, unless, in the case when a certain definite quantity is assigned to her, in such a way, that the Monastery is not bound to give her anything more or anything else as a substitute, or in such a way that she is not bound to

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\* No. 2766. † Lib. 4, Nos. 19-23.

render any account of it. In illustration of this last point we may ask the question whether a Religious can give away her pittance at dinner?

She may; for in these things that are to be consumed like food the use cannot well be distinguished from the dominion, and to whom the one is given the other must be given also as they are not separable. Some, however, wish this to be understood of the pittance, which is limited to the individual such as eggs, or meat given to each, but not of pittances that are given without limitation, such as bread, etc. Of these they are to take what they require for their own use alone. If the Superior, for a reasonable cause and to guard against abuses, should forbid the Religious to give away the pittance, by reason of the prohibition they could not, without fault, dispose of these things, and for the sake of the public good such orders should be observed.

With the leave of the Superior, at least presumed, Religious may receive or refuse gifts that are freely offered them.

It is certain that without leave they cannot renounce legacies or bequests, or fortunes inherited, or to which they succeed, or wages due to them in justice; because in the case of solemn vows they are acquired to the Convent, and in case of simple vows such renunciation or disposing of them would be exercising proprietorship. But it is otherwise in regard to gifts, because the vow of poverty does not oblige Religious to acquire for the Monastery, and Religious do not promise by vow to receive what is offered; hence a Religious may without violating her vow ask a benefactor who wishes to give her a *personal* gift, to give it to a relative or friend.—Nevertheless, although it cannot be said to be a sin against the vow to refuse, it would, however, be a sin against charity towards the Convent to refuse without a just cause, especially if the Convent be poor or in debt. It might also be a sin of injustice if the person making the donation intends it for the Convent rather than for the individual Religious, which is, generally speaking, the case.\*

A nun may make for a friend or relative, corporals, covers for pixes and ciboriums, Agnus Dei's, etc., and especially if the friend or relative should supply the materials. I may here add that *Agnus Deis*, *relics*, *gospels*, and such like things whose only value is spiritual rather than temporal, do not fall under the prohibition of the vow of poverty. If relics are in rich cases they could not be kept or disposed of without permission, but then it is the case, not the relic, that comes under the vow.

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\* Craisson, No. 2774. Vide Lig., lib. 4, No. 20. See also Bouix., T. 2, p. 559.

Rodriguez, whom Sanchez quotes and follows, says that the sin in giving a breviary or office book or something similar and of value to another nun of the same Convent would not be mortal, because that breviary, or whatever other article it may be, remains in the possession of the Convent, and the Superiors in this case are not supposed to be *graviter* unwilling. Little or nothing is taken away from the Convent in this case. Hence Suarez observes that a greater quantity is required for a grave fault when one gives to another Religious of the same Convent than to an *extern*, since the thing still remains in the same Community.

I have already referred to the question of a Religious making a will. Now as to whether a nun at her death can give anything away. St. Liguori says: \* that if a Religious asks a Superior for something to be given to a person after death, and the Superior promises to do it, she is bound to keep the promise and carry out the will of the dying nun. The power of making a will at death and the power of bestowing some gift should not be confounded, for the prohibition, where it exists concerning the former power, does not at all affect the latter.

At the conclusion of this chapter on poverty we may mention one other question which shows the sanction given by the Church to Religious poverty, and the penalties inflicted on those who were found guilty of violating this vow.

Regulars of both sexes who at death were found in possession of goods or money without leave, according to the Ancient Canon Law, should be buried together with their money outside the walls of the Monastery, and in a dunghill, as a sign of their condemnation. For such a Religious the Holy Sacrifices were not to be offered nor public prayers said, and, if by chance, the guilty Religious happened to be buried with his brethren he should be exhumed from the place if this could be done without scandal.

The said penalty should not be inflicted indifferently on every one who should die in the possession of money, but only on those who, after previous warnings and admonitions, should be found at death, in possession of money and *peculium* of which they were unwilling to be deprived.†

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\* Lib. 4, No. 22.

† Ferraris V., Votum Art 2, No. 151. See also the Council of Trent, Sess. 25, Cap. 2, in fine de Regular.

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CHAPTER V.

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THE VIRTUE OF POVERTY.

1. Poverty, as a virtue, is that which regulates our affections in regard to temporal goods and their use. What has been said in the two last chapters regards the vow of poverty and its obligations, there is also the virtue of poverty, which we propose to explain in this chapter. It is well to direct our minds, after considering what is sin and what is not sin, to the excellence and perfection of this holy virtue. When speaking of the vow and its obligations it is necessary to avoid multiplying sins without sufficient reason, and one must proceed in the matter of explaining laws on the principle that "*odiosa sunt restringenda*." Hence the reasons of the limitations explained in preceding chapters in regard to the obligations imposed by the vow. When we come to consider the virtue and its perfection then full latitude is given. There can be no danger of excess in the spirit of holy poverty, which is the poverty of affection, or in other words the virtue of poverty.

This is the poverty spoken of by Our Saviour in the 1st of the Beatitudes, when he says:—"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."

2. Some degree of this poverty of spirit is necessary for every Christian, inasmuch as it is necessary for everyone to be detached from the inordinate love of the world and its riches, and to avoid using their means in a way which may be injurious to their salvation. This virtue does not go against the possession of riches, for a secular can lawfully labour in order to acquire riches and wealth and to increase his possessions, provided he has a good and honest end in view.

He would, however, sin against the virtue of poverty (1) by immoderately desiring to augment his fortune, (2) by being too much attached to his possessions, (3) by excessive fear of losing them.

3. The Religious who has renounced by vow the possession or use of temporal things may sin against the virtue of poverty in many ways:—1. By regretting the loss of the things she renounced, or by desiring to possess them again. And if these thoughts or desires would endanger the vow, the sin would be not against the virtue only, but also against the vow, as we have

said in a former chapter. 2. A Religious cannot without sin possess unnecessary things; for although permission may in cases of the kind be a security against the violation of the vow, it would not protect the Religious from violating the virtue in possessing superfluities. Such is the idea that one forms of the Religious State that a Religious at her entrance is considered to be willing to renounce her ease and the luxuries and comforts of life, and to be content with what is necessary; and Religion on its part engages to provide for her only what is necessary; and it is therefore, against the spirit of her state to desire or to possess superfluous things. What is here called *necessary* should not be understood in a rigorous sense, for under it are included all things becoming and suitable for the Religious and her state, and this is to be judged according to the nature of the thing, the Rules, the ministers or officials of the Order, the kind of poverty professed; the quality, the needs, the age, and the position of the persons. An old and infirm nun has need of many things that would be superfluous for others. A Superior, by reason of her office, has need of requisites for her duties—money, stamps, cheques, etc.—And a Religious of the Order of St. Benedict can lawfully possess what would be against poverty in a Religious of the Order of St. Francis. 3. A Religious would sin against the virtue of poverty by excessive attachment to things, even necessities. The smallness of the value of the object does not excuse her, for in this case it is the excessive attachment that constitutes the sin. The attachment is ordinarily shown by frequently thinking of the object, by fearing to be deprived of it, and by feeling pain and resentment at being deprived of it. 4. A Religious would sin against the virtue of poverty by permitting the goods of the community to be lost or deteriorated, even when she is not charged with their care, and that the vow does not place any obligation on her of preserving them, for as a member of a community she should watch over its interests. The sin would be against the vow if she were charged with the duty of taking care of the things, for her neglect, in this case, would amount to a positive act of alienating or consuming what is permitted to perish.

Other faults against poverty may here be referred to. 1. To be unwilling to want necessities. 2. To love to have what is agreeable and convenient. 3. To be careless of the things we have for our use. 4. To keep superfluities. 5. To despise what is poor and what is scarce. 6. To have things more valuable than what are allowed, to hide things, to transfer them, to give them away or appropriate them.

A Religious should therefore take proper care of what is given her for her use, and not fall into that way of too much detachment to the extent of becoming careless and indifferent to everything that does not concern her, or to such a disregard of the goods of the Convent as would lead to prodigality or lavishness.

*Community Life.*—One of the principal objects of the virtue of poverty in regard to Religious is *community life*, which consists in being content with that which is given to the others in food, clothing, dwelling, and such like, and in avoiding unnecessary exemptions and dispensations. The Holy Council of Trent\* strongly recommends this manner of life and admonishes Superiors to watch over and preserve it. The obligation of conforming oneself to community life is grave of its own nature. Nothing but necessity should exempt one from it, and as Superiors are bound to see that all observe it, so subjects are, on their part, bound to submit to it. On this point Religious should distrust themselves, and not seek to obtain dispensations that are not really necessary, for if unnecessary dispensations be granted, they would not save one from sin against the virtue, even though they should prevent the violation of the vow of poverty. It often happens that individual Religious pay no attention except to that which concerns themselves, and overlook the fact that they form a part of the entire body whose members profess the same manner of life, and whose action should be one. It is by departure from the common life that, ordinarily speaking, relaxations are introduced into a Religious Community, and they are very culpable who, throwing off the obligations which the Religious life imposes, bring about the ruin of regular discipline. In vain they pretend to justify themselves by the permission which sanctions the exemptions, exceptions, and privileges which they enjoy; the condescension of Superiors should not be used as a stumbling block to their Religious subjects. And as this obligation is binding on all the members of a Religious Community, it may be said that it is more rigorous for the more ancient in the Order and for Superiors whose careless example may be more fatal to the house, and who by their age and employments are more exposed to the temptation of seeking exemptions and dispensations. The fault which one commits in this matter is the more grave as her example may make the more impression and have greater influence in the community, as it is the more likely to introduce relaxations and contempt of the Rule and the Religious Observance.

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\* Sess. 25.



The Superior who grants dispensations of the kind here spoken of, sins as well as the subject who uses them, for it is her duty to watch over, above all things, the spiritual welfare of the community, and she ought never to sacrifice the public good for any private good or individual considerations. There are circumstances in which, in order to avoid a greater evil a Superior may be right in granting useless and capricious demands, but this is always a misfortune for the community, and a far greater evil to the Religious who reduces her Superior to this extremity.

The virtue of poverty in a Religious should be more or less perfect. Its perfection may be considered, first, in its extent, that is in respect to the things which are forbidden, or which one has renounced; second, in the interior detachment from worldly things; thirdly, in the motive of this detachment.

In regard to the first the more you retrench superfluities and confine yourself to necessities the more perfect is your poverty. The degree which is of obligation in the practice of this virtue consists in having only what is necessary. *Necessary* being taken here in the sense of what is fit and suitable, but there is a long distance between *fit* and *suitable* and *absolutely necessary*. And one advances in the perfection of poverty under this consideration the more this distance is shortened. If content with what is strictly necessary, you proceed to have only that which is least and worst and meanest in the community, and even to desire to be in want of that which is necessary, then you may be said to have attained the highest degree of poverty considered as to its extent.

Albertus Magnus thus describes poverty:—"True and perfect poverty abandons all things willingly and joyfully for God. It possesses only what is necessary, it makes one think himself unworthy of possessing even what is necessary, and it makes one rejoice gladly for God when that which is necessary may be wanting."

As to the *interior detachment*. It is in this, properly speaking, that the virtue of poverty consists, and in this one may be more or less perfect. It is to regard oneself always as poor, as having nothing but what is given as alms, taking nothing but what is given by the Superior, regarding the goods of the Community as things consecrated to God, using them without attachment to them, ready to be despoiled of everything which one has for her use, so as to be able to say at any moment with St. Francis of Assisi: "*My God and my all,*" and with Holy David: "*What do I wish for in Heaven or on earth but Thee O my God!*" This is the detachment which constitutes the spirit of poverty.

*The motives of this detachment.* The Religious should practise the external privation and the internal detachment through contempt of earthly things, through the desire of eternal riches, or through the spirit of mortification, in order to imitate the poverty of Christ, or through the love of God, in order to be able to consecrate to Him all her affections, and to serve Him with her whole heart. These are the motives that should actuate and influence the Religious soul in the practice of the virtue of holy poverty. We may add other degrees of this virtue as given by St. Bonaventure:—

*a.* To abandon all temporal things. *b.* To leave secular or worldly friends. *c.* To leave oneself.

*a.* Not to labour for transitory goods. *b.* Not to desire them. *c.* To despise them, and only when necessary to accept them.

*a.* To be content with everything. *b.* To admit only necessities. *c.* To desire to be in want even of necessities.

*a.* To take or receive nothing without permission. *b.* To have nothing superfluous. *c.* to wish to have the poorest things for our use, and to rejoice when necessities are wanting.

The following points of difference between the Virtue and the Vow of Poverty are given by Gautrelet:—\*

1. The vow has for its object to despoil us externally of temporal goods in a more or less perfect manner: the virtue has for its immediate object to detach our hearts from all irregular affections for temporal goods. The vow of poverty is then the means, and the virtue of poverty is as it were the end, the virtue is therefore more perfect in itself than the vow, as the end is more perfect than the means, and interior detachment is better than exterior want. The excellence of the *vow* of poverty, however, must also be estimated by the sacrifice which one makes in renouncing temporal things, and the facilities which are thus afforded for acquiring *Poverty of spirit*, which in a sense, is more perfect than the vow, for it is in order the more surely and the more easily to attain it that the vow is made.

2. The virtue of poverty is more extensive than the vow; for we have seen that one can fail in the virtue without sinning against the vow; and, on the other hand, one can never break the vow without sinning against the virtue, which should be observed in all things, especially in things regarding the vow and the Divine law.

3. The virtue embraces both the duties that are obligatory

and those that are merely matters of counsel or perfection, the vow only extends to obligatory duties, because outside this it embraces no further object. Take away the idea of obligation and you take away the idea of a vow. In the fulfilment of the vow nothing can be omitted without sin, which is not the case in regard to the perfection of the virtue.

4. The virtue is susceptible of greater or less perfection according to the motive and manner in which the will practises it, but the motive of the vow is always the same, namely, that of religion, although the will may add other motives, or embrace it more or less perfectly, its fulfilment is always the same.

5. Such, nevertheless, is the close connection between these two, in one who has made a vow of poverty, that one who sins against the virtue, attacks, at least in an indirect manner the vow, inasmuch as it weakens the principle which ensures the observance of the vow, and it is none the less true to say, in this sense, that the virtue is a means of preserving the vow, as the vow is a means of acquiring the virtue.

From the author already quoted (Gautrelet), we have the following teaching as to the manner in which the Virtue of Poverty affects the Community:—

1. Communities that possess immovable goods would sin against the virtue of Poverty by amassing riches to excess, and particularly by receiving alms beyond their needs; for thus they deprive other poor of their necessary assistance or support to which they have a kind of right. Religious Houses may, nevertheless, without sinning against the virtue of Poverty, augment their means and revenues with a view of better securing and promoting community life, or to provide the Religious with what is necessary; or with a view of being able to admit a greater number of subjects; or to supply a dowry to some indigent persons who may apply to Religion for help of the kind. Sometimes also it may be to help other Houses of the same Order which may be in need, as one can always interpret in this sense the intention of benefactors. They can also reserve means to build a new Convent or make a new Foundation, &c.

2. Communities that cannot possess immovable goods should guard against tarnishing the purity of the poverty which they have professed, by providing themselves, a long time in advance, with all that can be necessary; lest they should lessen the absolute dependence which they should have on the providence of God, and the full confidence with which they should look to Him.

3. Religious Communities of every kind ought to be guided

in the matter of Poverty, more by the spirit of faith than by motives of human prudence; and in acquiring goods and administering them they should never forget that they are Religious. They should first be mindful to give alms to the poor according to their means. This they ought to do through the motive of public edification, as also, because it is the intention of benefactors and donors that these Religious Houses devote their superfluous goods to some holy purpose. *In stipendia monachorum et pauperum* is the remarkable clause inserted in the acts of nearly all Monastic Foundations. The alms should be regulated according to the resources of the Convent, the needs of the poor, and other circumstances.

2ndly. It is necessary to take care of the goods of the House, so that the love of ease and comfort may not be introduced, nor the use of objects allowed that are too precious for the Religious State, nor the possession of numerous superfluities; and at the same time it is necessary to take care that the Religious may not want necessities, or in any way be forced to have recourse to means opposed to the spirit or practice of Religious poverty.

This author goes on to mention other things such as selling eatables, giving presents, preparing repasts, but as these things are explained in a former chapter, they need not be further dwelt upon in this place.

Against the Beguards and Fraticelli who said that to have anything, even in common, would take away from Evangelical poverty, and against others who denied that Christ and His Apostles had any goods in common, St. Thomas teaches that to have goods in common is lawful, and in accordance with Evangelical perfection. He shows also that in this we have the example of Christ, who charged Judas with the care of the purse or temporalities. He says that the reason riches are considered an obstacle to perfection is because they require so much solicitude and attention which draws away the mind from divine things, and to renounce them is to remove this obstacle. He also reminds us that perfection consists, not so much in poverty, as following Christ according to St. Jerome, who says, on the words of St. Matthew, *Behold we have left all and followed thee*, "that it does not suffice to leave all," St. Peter added, "and we have followed thee." Poverty is, as it were, the instrument of perfection, inasmuch as it removes the impediments in its way arising from wordly cares and solicitude inseparable from riches, a superabundance of goods or riches in common, either in movables or immovables is an impediment to perfection, though it does not altogether

exclude it. But to have external goods in common, either in movables or immovables or otherwise, inasmuch as such things are necessary and sufficient for the support of the Community does not impede perfection but rather supports it. It is useful to think of this, as it brings before the mind the end of Religious poverty, and may be measured by the particular ends of the various Religious Orders.

1. Religious Orders which have for their immediate object *active* duties (*ad militandum vel ad hospitium*) would be imperfect if they had not goods and means in common. 2. Orders purely *contemplative* require less; so that the too great solicitude for temporal management may not interfere with their spiritual duties. 3. Those that embrace both *active* and *contemplative* duties, such as, missions, preaching, teaching, visiting the sick, etc., require more than the purely *contemplative*. The general rule is, abundance for the first, moderate allowance for the second, and for the third as much as may prevent too much solicitude for worldly matters so as to interfere with the good works of their calling.

In the case of mendicants it may be objected that this manner of living occasions greater solicitude than to have moderate incomes; and also that inconveniences arise from the number of both sexes who go round questing, that it seems impossible to supply all wants without much time, labour and solicitude that takes away from the things of God and spiritual occupations.

No doubt there are many difficulties, but many of them may be removed and prevented. They may arise 1st from the indiscriminate and promiscuous reception of all subjects presenting themselves, and often many useless members; better few and good.

2ndly. From incurring unnecessary and extravagant expenses; getting into debt.

3rdly. From the imperfect lives of some Religious, which makes seculars slow to give, and God, the most just distributor, withdraws his help from such as badly deserve it.

We may now conclude this chapter by the following reflections on the virtue of poverty. 1. There is great freedom from external things in the soul that is really poor in spirit, and when the soul is thus free it may fly to God without obstacles. "He loves Thee less," says St. Augustine speaking to God, "who loves anything with Thee which he does not love for Thee."

2. The poor are most pleasing to God, as is shown by the example of Christ Himself, who had not whereon to lay His head,

who was born in poverty, lived in want, and died naked on the Cross. See the joys of the Saints in their poverty and want! Witness the example of St. Paul the Apostle, who esteemed everything as vain except the love of God. Also St. Francis of Assisi and St. Francis de Sales, who had possessions, yet lived in the spirit of poverty. Contrast these with the examples of worldly misers and the rich lovers of the things of earth, and their own ease and comfort.

3. The providence of God will never permit those to want who are truly poor in spirit for His sake. "*Look at the lilies of the field and the birds of the air they labour not, neither do they spin, and your Heavenly Father provideth for them, how much more you, O ye of little faith.*"

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## CHAPTER VI.

### ON CHASTITY.

Although we have only to treat of chastity as vowed in Religion it may be useful in explanation of the subject to say a word about three different vows that are sometimes made in the world in connection with this virtue.

They are:—1. A vow not to marry. 2. A vow of virginity. And 3. A vow of chastity.

By the first vow not to marry, one simply obliges herself not to contract matrimony, and her vow does not extend to sins against the 6th Commandment. Provided she does not get married she keeps the vow, and any sins she might commit against purity would be against the virtue of chastity and against the natural and Divine Law, but not against religion or the vow.

The *vow of virginity*, strictly understood, means not only not to get married, but to avoid all external acts against purity. Sins of thought or desire are not included in the vow literally understood; but it often happens that those who make a vow of virginity mean a vow of chastity in its full sense, including thoughts, words, and deeds, and their obligation in this is determined by their intention.

As to the vow of chastity, although in a general sense it is not incompatible with marriage, because there is such a thing as

conjugal chastity, however, the word is in common, either in a wider sense, and this vow obliges not only as much as such things as are against the virtue of chastity, but also in the support of the Community. It is useful to all that is lawful in that state.

This vow of chastity may be taken either at the end of Religion, or it may be conditional or unconditional. It is useful to all ends of the *absolute, perpetual*, and perfect in every respect, its immediate object is reserved to the Pope. If only *temporal* or *conditional* it would be impermissible. Bishop can dispense from it.

The vow of chastity as taken in Religion is a promise made to God of perpetually abstaining from every voluntary sensual gratification, whether internal or external, not only unlawful, but also lawful. Hence religious chastity is a vow by which Religious promise to deny themselves all voluntary sensual gratification against purity, whether internal or external. It means to keep the soul free from every sin against purity, and to renounce marriage and all that would be lawful in the married state.

Hence by the vow of chastity Religious are bound to abstain from every act whether internal or external against the virtue of purity, such as evil thoughts, desires, or consent, and all external words, looks, or actions. And the reason is, because the vow of chastity is a new obligation which Religious have imposed upon themselves above the obligation of the divine and natural law which prohibits all those things *extra conjugium*.

Chastity, which before the vow appertained only to the virtue of temperance, after the vow belongs also to the virtue of religion; and thus, the violation of chastity in a Religious has a twofold specific malice to be necessarily declared in confession, namely, the malice of luxury against chastity, and of sacrilege against religion.

A solemn vow of chastity invalidates espousals or engagements to get married, and marriage itself contracted after the vow is taken, and also marriage contracted before it if only *ratum* and *non consummatum*.

A simple vow of chastity does not by the common law invalidate matrimony contracted either before or after it. We say by the *Common Law*, because the Sovereign Pontiff can decree that a simple vow of chastity should invalidate matrimony in the same way as the solemn vow. And this he has actually done in regard to the *simple* vows taken by the Scholastics of the Society of Jesus.

Though they who have made a simple vow of chastity can validly contract matrimony, yet they cannot do so lawfully and would sin mortally by so doing.

o was born in poverty  
e the joys of the Sample vow of perpetual chastity the *sponsalia*, or  
e example of St. Paul not dissolved on the part of the person vowing, but  
in except the love the part of the other to whom the promise of marriage  
Francis de Sales, been made.\*

overtly. Conf. general rule to guide us as to the gravity of sins  
and the rich led against the vow of chastity is, that which would be a  
comfort. sin against the 6th or 9th Commandment in a person

3. The made no vow would be a grievous violation in a Religious;  
and what would be venial in a person without vows would be  
only venial in a Religious; because the circumstance of the vow  
of chastity does not change the obligation of the natural law, but  
only adds to it the circumstance of sacrilege, which, as to its  
gravity, follows the nature of the act to which it is joined.  
say that this is the general rule, for it might happen, that sins  
of this kind, which would be only venial in a Secular might be  
grievous in a Religious by reason of the scandal or bad example  
given.

I have only two other things to mention in regard to sins  
against this vow.

1st. The sins against this vow are all grievous whenever there  
is full consent of the will, as it does not admit of light matter  
like the other vows.

2nd. As I have said already, every sin against the vow con-  
tains a twofold malice, namely, that against the virtue of chastity,  
and that of sacrilege against Religion.

In regard to the first of these, it should be clearly understood  
that the full consent of the will means a deliberate act that con-  
sents to and desires the sin against purity; for it may happen,  
and often does happen, that in what is said, seen, heard, read or  
done, there may be found only curiosity, or carelessness, or vanity,  
and then we cannot conclude mortal sin, as we do not find any  
full and deliberate will towards sin of such a grievous kind in the  
Religious soul.

Sins of thought generally cause the most anxiety and trouble  
to Religious in connection with this vow. Although it is not  
necessary to go far to commit sin, nor is a long time required;  
for, we know that a sin, and a grievous sin too, may be com-  
mitted in the mind, and in an instant of time. We must not,  
however, fear the thought or temptation as long as the will is  
contrary to it, or not likely to yield to it.

To help us to form our conscience in this matter, it may

\* *Formis Vetum, Art. 2, No. 157 and 163, apud Bouix, Tom. 2, Pars. 6, Cap. 2.*



be well to remember the analysis of a thought. It has three grades:—

1st. The passing thought or imagination which is not sinful unless wilfully introduced into the mind.

2nd. The beginning of pleasure in the thought, or the thought dwelt upon without consent, which may be a venial sin through negligence.

3d. The deliberate consent in which is found the full act of the will and the grievous sin.

The rule given for good pious souls is that whenever they doubt on the matter, they may conclude that there was no full consent and no sin. For such souls also, if at the time of temptation they find in themselves no will or wish for the sin, they may rest satisfied and certain that there was no full consent and no mortal sin. It is not likely that they are guilty before God, who are so much troubled with the fear of offending Him.

Chastity is a virtue which regulates the human affections in regard to carnal pleasures. It rules the concupiscence by reason, as St. Thomas says, the soul is that in which it resides and which it regulates first of all, and afterwards it regulates, through it, the body. It has three degrees. 1st. It inclines to abstain from all unlawful pleasures of the senses, and this belongs to continence which is a part of chastity.

2nd. It makes one be moderate in the use of lawful pleasures.

3d. It renounces even those pleasures which would be lawful in another state.

The two first degrees of this virtue belong to everyone, to every Christian especially; the third for the most part belongs to souls that tend to perfection, especially to Religious. For these this virtue includes the three degrees, the two first, by reason of the natural law, the third, by reason of the vow which interdicts all pleasures contrary to chastity.

In the perfection of this virtue, three degrees may be considered:—1st. *Purity of body*, which means not only to avoid all acts opposed to this virtue, but also continual exertion to mortify oneself—to make the body a living sacrifice, acceptable and pleasing in the sight of God.

2nd. *Purity of heart*, which is the essence and the spirit of chastity, and without which external purity is of no avail. This purity includes a horror of unchaste thoughts and seeks to prevent too sensible movements of the heart towards creatures, which withdraw it from God.

3d. *Purity of soul*, which means to have the soul free, not

only from all stains of impurity, but from all other evil passions and vices as well, from *pride, ambition, anger, envy* etc.

Hence Father De Rancè, speaking on this subject thus explains it.\* "There is no reason to think that the Lord could be satisfied with a mere exterior chastity in such persons with whom he contracts a union so direct and so intimate, as is that which he effects by the Religious Vows, or even that of the soul when only confined to exemption from exterior disorders, but on the contrary he requires a perfect chastity, that is to say, a purity which banishes all vice and passion from the soul, and in a word, everything that might displease Him. Can it be imagined that the soul who is exempt only from the more gross impurities, can be more pleasing to him, if, at the same time she is filled with pride, vainglory, envy or anger? And do we not find that the foolish virgins, though they preserved their chastity without blemish, were nevertheless excluded the nuptial chamber and treated as though they were impure sinners.

Hence the chastity to which the Religious is obliged, signifies much more than a well-regulated mode of conduct, it comprises the whole body of his actions, and admits nothing that might tarnish their beauty, for he has given himself to Jesus Christ, and consequently all his thoughts, words and actions, and even the smallest moments of his life belong to that Divine Lord and Master. This is the object which should exclusively fill the entire capacity of his heart, and therefore everything that he admits therein, which is not Jesus Christ, or dignified with His name, authority or love, should be constantly and irrevocably excluded from his affections."

As to whether the virtue of chastity is distinguished from the vow, we have the following answer given by Könnings in his theology.† "There is no difference, between them by reason of the object, because the vow extends to all that belongs to the virtue. They differ however in this, that in those things which are prohibited by the virtue, two sins are committed if the vow is violated, whilst if it be in a matter only prohibited by the vow, it would be only one sin. Thus, if a person bound by a simple vow of chastity should get married, only one sin, namely, that against the vow and Religion would be committed by the conjugal right. So that it might happen that the vow would be violated without offending against the virtue of chastity."

The same author also says: "The virtue of chastity besides

\* Chapter v. Monastic State.

† Tract. de Statibus particularibus No. 1170.

the obligations which it imposes, persuades also—and leads us on to the practice of counsels leading to great perfection, whilst the vow only affects the matter which is obligatory.”

The means to be employed for preserving and increasing the virtue may be arranged in three classes:—

1st. Those which have for their object to strengthen within us the interior principle of this virtue, which enables us to resist temptations through the grace which they communicate to us, or which we receive through them, as for example, the Sacraments, prayer, etc.; because this is a virtue which cannot be preserved without the divine aid, and to be obtained by the Sacraments and by prayer. *Ask, and it shall be given*, says our Divine Saviour in the Gospel of St. Matthew and St. Augustine says, *Cum me pulsat aliqua turpis cogitatio recurro ad vulnera Christi, tuta requies in vulneribus Salvatoris.*\* St. Liguori advises in cases of danger and temptation to make the sign of the Cross and have recourse to our guardian Angels and to our Blessed Lady whom he calls,† “The mother of fair love and the custodian of virginity.”

2nd. Those means which have for their object to lessen the power of the exterior principle, which inclines us to evil, as for example, the practice of *mortification* and *humility*.

Chastity is the lily among thorns, hence the practice of mortification is necessary. This was the means used by the Apostle St. Paul, as he himself tells us, *I chastise my body, and reduce it into subjection*. And especially, this should be observed in regard to the appetite, for St. Thomas well says, “*Diabolus victus de gula non tentat de libidine.*”

The practice of humility is also needed. St. John Climacus says that “One who fights against the flesh, with the virtue of continence alone, is like a man cast into the sea, who tries to save himself by swimming with one hand; let, therefore, *humility*—the other hand—come to the aid of continence.”‡

3rd. The third class of means embraces those which have for their object to protect us against the attacks of the enemy, and which serves as a bulwark or wall of defence against the numerous dangers to which this virtue is exposed from without. These are the custody of the senses, especially the eyes, to fly occasions, and to avoid idleness. In avoiding occasions, we are specially recommended to avoid familiarity and useless conversations with persons of the other sex. St. Bonaventure gives the

\* Méd. Cap. 22.

† St. Lig. Selva de castitate.

‡ St. Lig., *ibid.*

following signs, by which we may know when spiritual affection becomes carnal :—

1. Long and useless conversations; when they are too long they are sure to be useless.
2. Mutual admiration and praises.
3. Excusing each other's defects.
4. To affect little jealousies.
5. In absence, to experience inquietude, and restlessness.

I may here quote the example given in Ecclesiastical history of a certain holy woman, who exercised her great charity in burying, or having buried, the bodies of the Martyrs. One day she came across one who appeared to be dead, but it was found that he had not yet breathed his last. She caused him to be brought to her house, took care of him and attended him, and he recovered—"but, alas!" as St. Liguori expresses it, "these two Saints, by conversation together, lost both their chastity and the grace of God."

The testimony of St. Augustine should be a warning to all who may find themselves in this danger; he says:—" *Magnos Prælatos Ecclesiæ sub hac specie corruisse reperi; de quorum casu non magis præsumebam quam Hieronymi et Ambrosii.*"

It can be safely said, that the more one uses the different means here suggested for the preservation of this angelical virtue, the greater will be the measure and the degree of its perfection in the soul; for God expects us to co-operate always with His grace, and the exercise of these different means constitutes our co-operation in this matter. We should never forget that the preservation of chastity is more difficult by reason of our fallen nature and exposed to more dangers than any other virtue.

To illustrate this, and as a warning against too much self-confidence in our strength in matters concerning purity, it may be well to remind ourselves of the effects of our fall, and that which fallen human nature has to fear, in the words of a learned doctor :—\*

"The propension of the flesh, I mean that which tempts us against the Sixth Commandment, differs in various most important respects from all others. A very little consideration will sufficiently show this. Suppose it is a fast day; who ever heard of the notion that the mere sight of meat, much more the mere reading about it, is so proximate an occasion of sin as to be in itself mortal? Or (to avoid objections which may be raised

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\* Dr. Ward, in the *Dublin Review*.

against this particular instance) suppose I were a Cistercian, and meat were always unlawful to me; who in such a case ever heard of a notion like that above imagined? Yet we all know the frightful penalty involved in allowing ourselves to gaze on evil objects; or even to read about them in matters of impurity. Or let me suppose the case of a Christian, who was once in the habit of stealing, and, by help of his thefts, leading a comfortable and luxurious life, but who has now reformed and belongs to some strict Order. Who ever heard that the contemplation of wealth—the mere looking at fine equipages, grand appointments, handsome houses, etc., produces the almost inevitable effect of reviving the passion, *delectatio*, in regard to the old mortal sin? Yet, in this matter such would be the case. Nay, take that very propension which of all is far the nearest to that which we are considering: take desire of *revenge* as it exists in the souls of persons of some nationalities. To a revengeful man, even when reformed, the sight of his enemy might doubtless be a great occasion of sin. But surely no one will deny that such a man may read the accounts of murders in general, and may enter too into every detail and particular of some individual murder, where the parties concerned are quite unknown to him, without so much as a passing temptation to his old sin. How totally opposite is our nature in regard to impurity; indeed, spiritual writers universally recognize this fact. As one instance of this recognition, they will never permit any such detailed consideration of past sins under this head, as they most earnestly recommend in regard to all other sins of whatever kind” . . . etc.

Father de Rancé\* gives us a solemn admonition in regard to this preservation of chastity that should be impressed upon our souls. “Remember,” he says, “that this virtue is the foundation of the building, which, if destroyed, the whole edifice must fall, as it is insufficient for its own conservation if left alone; be always convinced that you carry a treasure in frail earthen vessels; avoid everything as destructive, that might expose it to danger in the least degree; and consider every excess in a matter so very important as the greatest and the most incurable of evils; for though it be true that there is no fall from which the hand of God may not raise the soul; and that there is no disorder, however great, which the tears of true repentance may not heal whilst we are in this life; yet these cases are so very rare that it may be said with truth, that whoever has proved unfaithful in a state so holy shall

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\* Chap. v.

not be able to find sufficient tears to bewail his misfortune, nor sufficient time to efface his sin."

In conclusion, it may be well to remind ourselves of the special excellence or dignity of this virtue; for this virtue, besides being necessary for the perfection of our state of life, is one of great excellence and dignity.

1st. Its first excellence is that it is in a singular manner recommended and loved by our divine Saviour.—He says in the Gospel of St. Matthew \* *All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. He that can take, let him take it*, and the whole life of Our Saviour from His being conceived and born of a Virgin, until his death, proves His love for this virtue.

2nd. It renders men here on earth like the Angels in Heaven. *They will be like the Angels of God in Heaven, who neither marry nor are given in marriage.*

St. Bernard says "Chastity makes Angels of men," and St. Jerome says "To live in the flesh without the flesh is Angelical."

3rd. Chastity is called in the Scriptures our very sanctification. This is the will of God, says St. Paul,† *your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication. That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour. Not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who know not God. . . . For God hath not called us to uncleanness but to holiness.*

4th. Lastly, chastity is a sign of predestination to eternal glory. *Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.* Those who practise this virtue are distinguished here on earth, and have a special crown of glory in heaven. *These are they who were not defiled with women: for they are virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.‡ These were purchased from among men, the first-fruits to God and to the Lamb.*

## CHAPTER VII.

### ON THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE.

*Obedience is better than Sacrifices.*§ St. Gregory says, "That obedience is better than sacrifices, because by sacrifices in the old law the flesh of other animals was offered, but by obedience our own will is immolated."

\* 19. † 1 Thess. 4. ‡ Apoc. xiv. 4. § 1 Kings, xv. 22.

Obedience is the most excellent of all the vows, because:—

1. By it man offers to God his own will, which is the most precious thing he possesses, which is, in fact, the only thing he can, properly speaking, call his own. The free will of man is never forced, not even by God Himself, but by the vow of obedience the sacrifice of that will is made to God.

2. The vow of obedience, as taken in Religion, contains under it the other two vows, and they do not contain it, so that in some Religious Institutes only the vow of obedience is explicitly made, the others being implicitly contained in it.

3. The vow of obedience comes nearer to, and more in contact with, those actions that immediately regard the end of the Religious State, namely, the actions that regard the love of God and our neighbour, such as reading, praying, visiting the sick, nursing, teaching, preaching, etc.

Obedience is a promise made to God to obey lawful Superiors in everything which they may command or forbid, according to the Rules of the Institute which one has embraced.

Since the obligation of obeying is correlative to the power of commanding, spiritual writers are accustomed to treat both these subjects in connection with the vow of obedience.

St. Thomas distinguishes a three-fold obedience in Religious, *necessary*, *perfect*, and *indiscreet*.—The *indiscreet* is that which extends to things unlawful, and of which we need not treat. The *perfect* extends to all that is lawful, even though they do not fall under any precept or obligation. It embraces all that belongs to the *virtue* of obedience. The *necessary* extends to all those things that are obligatory, and that fall under vow, or that are binding by virtue of the vow.

In this chapter only the *necessary* obedience, or the obedience that is obligatory by virtue of the vow, is treated of. Another chapter can be devoted to the perfection of the virtue of obedience.

The obligation of obedience extends only to things lawful, so that when it is certain that what is commanded is unlawful or sinful, or against the spirit of the Rule or against the precept of higher Superiors, a Religious is not bound to obey, because the Religious only binds herself to that which can be the object of the vow, and this, anything wrong or unlawful, cannot be.

It is, however, the common opinion of Doctors and Theologians that Superiors in doubtful cases are to be obeyed, *unless the precept would be such as to endanger our own reputation or be to the injury of another*. Because, according to Rodriguez, no one

obliged to obey with a grave risk or injury to himself or another, unless it is clear that the Superior lawfully commands, and has the authority to command, and for this reason a Religious is not bound to obey immediately if what is commanded is very difficult or troublesome (*valde difficilis aut nimis molesta*), but she may weigh the matter carefully and defer its execution as long as it is not certain that what is commanded is lawful and becoming.

Then again, by virtue of the vow, Religious are not bound to do what they know is the will of the Superior when that will has not been manifested by any precept; because the will retained in the mind effects nothing in regard to others. They are obliged to obey only when the command is intimated either in words or writing, or some other external sign.

After these general remarks, we may now explain three important questions concerning this vow, or the *necessary* obedience.

1. *The power of commanding.*
2. *The Subject of Obedience*, or those in whom the power of commanding resides.
3. *The Object of Obedience*, or that in which subjects are bound to obey.

#### THE POWER OF COMMANDING OR RULING.

The nature of the power by which Religious are ruled or governed is threefold, namely, by reason of the *vow* only; by reason of *jurisdiction* properly so called and by reason of *domination* or *simple government*.

1. *By reason of the vow only.* For, by reason of the vow a Superior may command Religious independently of the power of *jurisdiction* or *domination*. Thus, for example, even a Confessor, who certainly has no power of *domination* over his penitents, can command one who has made a vow to obey him, even though she may not be a Religious at all; but this obligation of obeying rests only on the virtue of Religion, whilst the other two arise from the virtue of justice.

2. *Jurisdiction* properly so called. By the name of *jurisdiction*, Suarez says, is here understood "a spiritual power belonging to the *keys* of the Church, and consequently granted by Christ through the medium of his Vicar on earth or other Bishops."<sup>\*</sup>

It is also said to be "the power of ruling subjects in order to

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<sup>\*</sup> De Rel. Tom. 3, Lib. 2, Cap. 18.



their eternal life." It is divided into jurisdiction *in foro interno* and *in foro externo*. The first, that is, jurisdiction *in foro interno*, is that which is exercised in the tribunal of penance. Jurisdiction *in foro externo* is that which regards primarily and directly the public good of the body of the faithful, and is exercised in making laws and in deciding controversies of doctrine and discipline and the like.\*

3. By the power of *domination* (*potestas dominativa*), Suarez says, ought to be understood a *jus*, or right acquired by Religion and its Prelates to command Religious, and use or direct their actions as they may judge fit. This power is derived radically from the will of those who profess such a Rule, and give themselves to Religion with the promise and offering to obey according to it. . . . Although improperly, it may be called *jurisdiction*. . . . we should, however, avoid the abuse of the word, as it would lead to ambiguity. . . . And, besides, neither in the Canon or Civil Law is anything called jurisdiction except the public political power which emanates from the Ruler or the Commonwealth.

This third kind of power belongs primarily to the Prelates of Religious; because in every society power is necessary for its government.

The *dominative* power is sufficient, and the power of jurisdiction is not required in all Religious Superiors, as is evident from Convents of Nuns in which the Abbess or Rev. Mother has not the *power of the keys*, and nevertheless, the nuns are subject to her as to a Mother.

All Religious, however, whether men or women, are and must be subject to the jurisdiction of someone, since they are necessarily subject to the Church; they are subject to the jurisdiction, either of the Supreme Pontiff immediately or to that of a Regular Prelate, to whom that jurisdiction is given in the case of *exempt* Religious; or of the Bishop if they are not *exempt*, such as nuns amongst us. All, however, whether monks or nuns, are subject, mediately at least, to the jurisdiction of the S. Pontiff, who exercises it either by himself or by another.†

#### THE SUBJECT OF OBEDIENCE.

The Superiors whom nuns are obliged to obey, are all those to whom by vow they have subjected themselves, either immediately or mediately. They are obliged, therefore, to obey

\* Könnings, No. 149. † Craisson, Nos. 2983-4-5 and 6.

their immediate Superiors, namely, the Abbess or Rev. Mother of the Convent, the Mother Provincial, and the Mother General of Institutes, that are established under a Superior General and distributed into different Provinces. Also, by virtue of the vow they are obliged to obey the Sovereign Pontiff, because he is the Supreme Head of all Religious Institutes, and all Religious bind themselves by vow to obey him. Nuns are also bound to obey the Bishop or Ordinary of the Diocese in all things to which his Episcopal authority extends; because in these things they are his subjects, and the obligation of obeying arises from the law of subjection.

Even nuns who are known under the name of *exempt* Religious are obliged to obey the Bishop in those things in which he holds himself, and acts as the Delegate of the Holy See, as for example the observance of the Enclosure.

Nuns *exempt* from Episcopal authority in other respects, are bound to obey the Prelate of their Order, and they are bound to do so by the same obligation as the Religious men of that Order, as the vow of obedience is precisely the same both for the men and women of the Institute.

All nuns must be subject either to a Bishop, or the Prelate, or Superior of some Religious Order of men. Because, as they are women, they are incapable of any spiritual jurisdiction, and all Religious by virtue of the vow are obliged to be subject to the power of jurisdiction, as well as the power of domination. In Great Britain and Ireland, in America, France, and elsewhere, and generally speaking in all Institutes approved by the Holy See in recent times, all nuns are under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the Diocese in which they live; such, for example, are the *Presentation Nuns*, *Sisters of Charity* and *Sisters of Mercy*, *Loretto Nuns*, *Sisters of the Cross and Passion*, *Sisters of La Sainte Union de S. Cœurs*, etc.

It is to these nuns, and those like them, that the instructions here given on this point refer. The more ancient Orders are guided in this matter by the particular Rules and observances and customs established amongst them in their relations to the Regular Prelates of their Orders, to whose jurisdiction they may be subject.

Those, then, to whom nuns are subject, by virtue of the vow, may thus be briefly enumerated:—

1. The Pope, to whom may be added the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and the College of Cardinals, *sede vacante*.
2. The Bishop of the Diocese, to whom may be added the Vicar-General; and the Chapter and Vicar Capitular, *sede vacante*

3. Their own immediate Superiors, namely, the Abbess or Rev. Mother of the House: The Mothers General and Provincial of Institutes thus formed under one Mother-General, and having Provinces.

4. Anyone with *delegated* authority from those who have ordinary jurisdiction over the Religious and their Convent.

In regard to the subjection of nuns to the Bishop or Ordinary, two questions of great importance require special attention, and should, as far as possible, be well understood. The first is how nuns who are subject to a Superior General depend in each Diocese upon the Ordinary. The second is the Canonical Visitation of Convents.

In regard to the first, *namely, how nuns subject to a Mother-General depend upon the Ordinary in the several dioceses in which they have houses?*

In answer to this question it may be well here to give the teaching of Craisson on the subject. He says:—\* “We have said above, that custom had introduced that nuns should depend on the Ordinary in important acts of administration, which custom, in regard to Convents not dependent on others, is not subject to any inconvenience, but ordinarily proves very beneficial since it often happens that nuns in various things need counsel and protection.

But when Convents scattered far and wide in different dioceses are subject to a Superior General, then many evils might arise and it would be most difficult to preserve unity in judgment and administration if each Convent should be dependent on the Bishop. For different Bishops might ordain and command differently about the same matter.

For the solution of this important question we say:—Either the Holy See, in approving the Constitutions of this kind, has determined the manner in which they depend on the Ordinaries, as Benedict XIV. did in his Constitution *Quamvis* of 30th April, 1749, as to the *English Virgins*, and in this case, the Rules given are certainly to be observed; or, nothing has been ordained or sanctioned by the Holy See, and then the nuns certainly depend on each respective Bishop of the place where they reside *for all those things that belong to Episcopal jurisdiction*; since these belong to each Bishop by reason of his Episcopal office, and cannot therefore be taken from him except in cases determined by the law. But as to those things which belong to economical

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\* Nos. 2,975, *et seq.*

administration, it cannot be admitted that in this respect nuns are subject to each respective Ordinary when they live under a Superior-General, for these things, as I have said, do not belong to the Bishop by reason of his Episcopal office, but by reason of custom. Now a custom is not to be observed unless it is good and reasonable, but this would not be the case if, for example, one Bishop would wish to place a nun over a Convent or Monastery whom another Bishop wishes to retain in her own Convent: if one Ordinary should wish to remove or expel certain nuns, and another Ordinary should be unwilling, as well as the Superior-General, to part with them. How, in these and a thousand other circumstances, could there be unity of government? How could the Congregation itself exist? Therefore, that custom is not reasonable by which, in respect to economical administration, nuns subject to a Superior-General should be dependent on each respective Ordinary; they depend only on the Superior-General in this respect, or, at most, on the Bishop to whom the principal Convent is subject, if the custom exists that by reason of government (*ratione regiminis*) (not, however, by reason of jurisdiction, which is necessarily restricted within diocesan limits) they should in the more grave and heavier acts of administration depend as to direction on that Bishop."

Father Gautrelet, in treating of this, says:—"In acknowledging the Bishop as the first Superior of a Congregation of this kind let it be understood, that his authority, as to its extent, depends on the Rules of the Congregation, and on the authority of the Holy See in its approbation of them. All the Convents of the diocese are subject to the Bishop in some respects, but not the Convents established in other dioceses, which depend on the respective Ordinaries for their direction and good order. In the capacity of first Superior the Bishop, with the accord of the Superiors of the Institute, can make some accidental changes, or introduce some slight modifications of the Rules. The full extent of Episcopal authority in these things cannot be very clearly determined without taking into consideration particular circumstances which vary very much in different places and dioceses. It is certain, that each particular house remains under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of the diocese, according to the decrees of the Council of Trent and the Apostolical Constitutions relative to Congregations of this kind. This was explicitly declared on the occasion of the establishment of the Religious of

the Good Shepherd, under one General Superior, by a Congregation of Cardinals." \*

As to this last point, it must be observed that according to the *Analectat Juris. Pont.* the Holy See does not admit that the Bishop of the place, where the principal House is situated, should be the Superior-General, and should constitute himself Superior-General for other dioceses, or over those Convents outside his own diocese.

The Holy See in recent times has so arranged things, that there may be no confusion in regard to each particular Institute and its relation both to the Bishop and the Roman Congregations, and this relation, as admitted amongst all such Institutes, may be clearly understood and briefly stated as follows :—"The Superior-General of an Institute has immediate authority over all her subjects. It belongs to her to appoint them to their several places and offices, to remove them from one Convent to another, to watch over the internal government and administration of all that belongs to the Institute."

"But each Convent is subject in spiritual matters to the Bishop of the diocese. And the recognition of the spiritual authority of the Ordinary is always expressed in the Statutes of the Institutes." †

From the above we conclude that nuns are entirely under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Bishop, like the rest of the faithful, but in the administration of their affairs and their internal government, when constituted under a Superior-General, they are not dependent on the several Ordinaries of the diocese in which they have their Houses.

It may also be remarked that when such administration is under Episcopal authority, as in the cases of other nuns *exempt* and *non exempt*, that authority of the Bishop is only *directive*. Craisson§ goes on to say :—"That besides the right which Bishops have of requiring an account of the administration of temporal affairs and of removing, for a just cause, the administrators, they can, not by law (*jure*), but by custom exercise other acts of administration over nuns subject to them, whether they have taken vows or not. For example, the Bishop can enact, that for things of great moment they should obtain his consent; it belongs to him to approve of the administrators (bursars or procurators), and that they submit to him their administration, etc. These things are supported by Canonists and the decisions of the S. Congregation.

\* 18th March, 1835. † Jan. 1861, col. 508. ‡ See Gautrelet, Vol. II., p. 138.  
§ No. 2930.

"If, however, interference in the administration of the goods of the Community is not sanctioned by custom, and if there be a custom to the contrary, the nuns can keep to it. It does not matter in this that they are subjects of the Bishop, for his superiority over them is not dominative, but only that of jurisdiction and the right (*jus*) of administration belongs to the dominative power.

"From this it may be understood, how Superiors of nuns may be treated by the Bishop or those deputed by the Bishop, to watch over them in respect to the temporal administration of the Convent. It is not lawful to deny them (the nuns) his consent *pro libitu*, but when no detriment can follow he should give his consent, because the right or power of administering, although depending on his consent, does not belong to him but to the nuns; and he injures their right if without a reasonable cause he prevents its exercise. He should not require that in light matters such as in small expenses, buying and selling, repairing and alms-deeds, and such like that his consent should be asked, because . . . the dependence introduced by custom, would, in this case, be not to the utility but to the detriment of the Convent—and such things would render the Religious life tiresome, and would be justly regarded as a certain species of tyranny." So far D. Bouix,\* who gives as an example certain Superiors (Bishops or Prelates) who prohibited the nuns, without their consent, to spend a sum to the amount of 50 francs., or even less, and finally he admonishes such Superiors that, *not by right of proprietorship*, they are able to interfere in the administration of the affairs and goods of the nuns, but only *by directive right*; and these things apply also to a Regular Superior or Prelate who may have Convents subject to him.

Hence, concludes Craisson,† contracts should be made in the name of the Convent, or of the nuns, and not in the name of the Bishop or other Superior, whether Secular or Regular, because it is not the Bishop or Superior that is bound by them but the Convent and the nuns.

*The Canonical Visitation.*—The second important matter of explanation is the subjection of nuns to the Bishop in the *Canonical Visitation*.

The following are the dispositions of the Canon Law in regard to the Canonical Visitation of nuns:—

1st. Once a year the Bishop ought to make the Canonical

\* De Regular. tom. 2, p. 317.

† No 2932.

Visitation of the nuns, and this is by virtue of his ordinary jurisdiction, if they are not *exempt*, if however they are *exempt*, and immediately subject to the Holy See, he visits them as the delegate of the Holy See; if they are *exempt* and subject to Regular Prelates the Visitation is to be made by the Regular Prelates, but at the same time the Ordinary may visit the Convent by reason of the *Enclosure*, that is, in regard to all that concerns the *Enclosure*.

The same may be done by the Vicar-General, by the special authority of the Bishop, and likewise the Vicar-Capitular according to the more common opinion.

2nd. The visitation may be *partial* only, and that is as to the *Enclosure* only; or *total*, which embraces many other things.

How the Visitation is to be made is prescribed in the Constitution *Felici* of Alexander VII., which only extends to Italy and the adjacent islands.

Pellizarius\* explains the object of this Visitation:—

"It is, he says, to be instituted not only concerning those things which the Council of Trent prescribes, namely, concerning things in connection with the substance of the Vows of Religion, food, and clothing, but also about the following things, namely:—How many nuns there are; whether Profession is made at the proper time; whether the habit of the Novice is distinct from that of the Professed; whether the nuns besides the substance of the vows observe also their Rule, the fasts prescribed in it, silence and other regular observances; whether at the proper time the Divine Offices are celebrated, and all assemble at them, whether the *Enclosure* is kept and the doors closed at the proper time . . . . Whether the Abbess, her assistant, and the other officials discharge their functions diligently; whether the *ordinary* and *extraordinary* Confessors fulfil their duties to the Convent; how the Novices are instructed, and also the pupils who are there for their education," etc.

Now in regard to all these questions of the Bishop I may state:—

That a nun when asked concerning the regular observance by the Prelate in the time of Visitation is certainly obliged to answer; because the Prelate in the Visitation is bound to ask about the observance of the Constitutions, as he is bound *under grave sin* to promote the common good, and, to promote the observance of the Constitutions is especially necessary for this end.

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\* *De Monialibus* page 228, apud Bouix Tom. 2, page 324.

In the same way the nuns would be bound to manifest the truth to the Canonical Visitor, because they are also bound to promote the common good, for as a part they are bound to co-operate for the good of the entire body.

Nor does it matter that the transgression of Rule or the Constitutions is something light, and not of much consequence. This may be true of transgressions taken individually and considered in themselves, but considered in respect to the common good they may be grievous and of very great importance in the manner in which they affect the end of the Institute and its welfare.

They are, however, in some cases excused from manifesting faults at the Visitation as at other times.

1st. They are excused if the fault is amended or the evil remedied; because it is not the fault that is sought for, but only the emendation of the delinquent, and this being effected the end is obtained, so that faults long passed and repented of, need not be told.

2nd. They are excused if their knowledge is derived only from rumour or hearsay, or light talkative persons, because such knowledge does not deserve credence.

3rd. Nor are they bound to their own or another's detriment to denounce, in cases when the natural law excuses from compliance with this duty.

4th. Nor if they know these things under a *natural secret*, unless the fault would be to the public injury of the Convent.

5th. Nor when they know that the Prelate would apply no remedy, for no one is obliged to a useless work, or when others have denounced it, because the end of denunciation is obtained, or if the fault is secret and no suspicion exists of it, or no disgrace or *infamia* has arisen, because as the Prelate cannot ask in such a case, neither can the nuns reveal it, unless they may manifest the sin to a Prelate as to a father, that he may obtain the conversion or amendment of the person. But always in such cases fraternal correction should go first if it be judged opportune, and there be hope of amendment or good to be derived from it, as this is the divine order and law.

In concluding this chapter I give the following propositions which embrace the points of relation between nuns and the Ecclesiastical Prelates.

1. Nuns are subject to the Bishop's spiritual jurisdiction, that is in regard to the Sacraments, and especially the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, and all connected with them, such as the Confessor, censures, reserved cases, the keeping of the Blessed Sacrament, Benediction, Masses, etc.



2. For a new Foundation or the building of a new Convent they require the permission of the Bishop.

3. Convents under a Superior-General are not under the authority of the Bishop in regard to the administration of their temporalities.

4. Other Convents, if required, are bound to give an account of their administration of temporalities to the Bishop, but his authority in this respect is only *directive*, as these things do not fall under his jurisdiction or proprietorship.

5. In the election of their Superiors, nuns are not subject to him in the choice of Superiors or other officials of the Monastery or Convent, unless the Constitutions and approved Rules give him a right in this respect, and then it should be exercised according to the terms of the Rules or Statutes that grant it.

6. Nuns are subject to the Bishop in regard to the Canonical Visitation, and nuns impeding this Visitation would incur ex-communication.

7. The strict rules and the law concerning Canonical Visitation are not to be applied to those Congregations of nuns which do not make profession of *solemn* vows. The Bishop, however, may visit them in the usual manner, and they are obliged to submit to it, according to the instructions and explanations given above, in all cases when the Visitation is canonically made, and this by reason of their obedience to the Ordinary.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE VOW OF OBEDIENCE—(Continued).

#### THE OBJECT OF OBEDIENCE.

By the object of obedience is here meant those things in which Religious are bound to obey their Superiors.

In the first place, let it be remarked that nuns are excluded by the Common Law of the Church from possessing or exercising any spiritual jurisdiction. Abbesses, therefore, and Rev. Mothers of Convents have no spiritual jurisdiction either ordinary or delegated, because, as Suarez says, *the power of the keys* is communicated to clerics only according to the ordinary and constant law of the Church, and all spiritual jurisdiction belongs to the

*power of the keys.* St. Thomas says:—"A female cannot have any spiritual jurisdiction." And again:—"A female has not the keys of Orders or jurisdiction." \* This is the universal law and usage of the Church.

Although they have no spiritual jurisdiction, they can, however, possess and exercise economic, domestic, and civil power, or what theologically is called "*potestas dominativa*," or the power to rule and govern, and this is the kind of power Abbesses and Rev. Mothers possess over their nuns. We have now to examine the extent of their power, both for the direction of Superiors and their subjects.

To understand how far the Abbess or Rev. Mother can command her subjects in virtue of holy obedience by a precept binding in conscience, I must quote at some length from Bouix's *Treatise de jure Regularium*†:—

On this matter there are three opinions:—

"1. Many think that she (the Abbess) cannot oblige in conscience, especially not *sub mortali*. . . because a woman is not capable of spiritual power, without which such a precept could not be enjoined.‡

"2. Others give her that power, and even with it the right and title of jurisdiction; for they say that she is capable of this at least by delegation. The Prelates of Religion, Bishops and the Pope, sometimes seem to have delegated this jurisdiction to Abbesses, as necessary for the government of their Convents.§

"3. Pellizarius, distinguishing between temporal and spiritual jurisdiction, says that the Abbess can impose precepts not indeed spiritual, which would suppose spiritual jurisdiction, of which she is not capable, but temporal, for which civil and domestic power is required, and this suffices, and this certainly she possesses."

The difference between the temporal and spiritual precepts consists in this, that the latter are ordained to the spiritual end of the subjects; the former to their temporal end or welfare, namely, the good government of the Convent, the tranquility and peace of the Community, etc.

The true solution of the above question, and the opinion to be held in regard to it is, that the Abbess or Rev. Mother can impose on their subjects precepts which bind them in conscience. || We have to distinguish the power of domination from that of jurisdiction. . . . It is the common opinion of Theologians that

\* Apud Bouix, page 425. † Vol. 2, Page 427, *et seq.* ‡ Suarez de Religione. § Suarez de Releg., Tom. 4, Tract 9, C. 3. || Suarez de Religione, *ut supra*.

the Superioress cannot have proper or real jurisdiction ; she has, however, the power of domination, that is, the power of administering and ruling the Convent and the persons in it, as well as all belonging to it. By reason of this power, she can command the nuns, and they are bound to obey in conscience, and by virtue of the vow of obedience. For the nuns promise by vow, obedience to the Abbess or Prioress or Rev. Mother, as is evident from the *formula* of Profession. Therefore, if the Abbess command them they are bound in conscience by their vow and promise, and by the virtue of Religion they must keep their promise and obey. Suarez in another place says : "There is nothing against making a vow to obey a woman in those things which she can command according to the Rule in order to perfection." Such a vow is of a better good, and contains nothing against the Divine or Ecclesiastical Law ; on the contrary, it seems morally necessary for the government and good order of any Monastery or Convent. Hence the vow of obedience taken by nuns refers to the Abbess or Superioress, and although these are not Prelates as to jurisdiction, they are Superiors as spiritual mothers ; and as the natural mother can command her children in those things which belong to her administration, so the Superioress can command her spiritual children. The power arises from the vow, and may easily be distinguished from the power of jurisdiction. Even this power is more limited in women than in men, and is always subordinate to the power of the latter, according to the will and practice of the Church. Hence the Abbess can command in virtue of holy obedience, and oblige in conscience. Between her and the nuns there is the order of superiority and subjection, authorized by the Sovereign Pontiff, and the vow of obedience obliges nuns, as subjects, to obey the Abbess, because by virtue of that order the Abbess possesses the power of exacting obedience, which power is contained in the right of superiority. Nor does she by this exercise spiritual jurisdiction, because what is commanded is supposed to be already imposed upon the nuns by the Rule, and the Abbess only uses the acquired right of exacting by virtue of the vow of obedience what is prescribed by the Rules, and, therefore, to define the extent of this power in each Abbess or Superioress, it would be necessary to consult the special statutes and customs of each Religious Institute, and be guided by them. That they have the power of giving precepts obligatory in conscience, by virtue of the power of domination, St. Liguori thinks the more probable opinion. Bouix thinks it certain, and Ferraris calls it the more common.

The distinction that the Superioress can oblige by *temporal* precepts and not by *spiritual*, does not appear to be either clear or well founded. Why should not a Rev. Mother, in order to correct the faults of a troublesome Religious, have the power to give her as a penance, to make a visit to the B. Sacrament, take a discipline, or make half-an-hour's mental prayer, or to be present at the Community prayers, etc. ?

Many authors, nevertheless, say that the Superioress cannot bind under grave sin. In this, however, let us take the advice of Suarez, and consult the Constitutions of the Convent or Institute. For, of itself, and if there be sufficient matter, and all the other conditions for ordering in this manner be observed, to disobey would be a grave sin, unless by the Rule or Constitutions or the directions of higher Superiors, her power should be limited in this matter.\* But according to the common opinion of doctors, the Superioress cannot impose a precept under grave sin in a light matter. Because her power does not exceed the limits of right reason, otherwise it would be to the injury and persecution of the Religious subjects. Right reason dictates that the precept should accommodate itself to the nature of the thing commanded, and therefore, if the matter is light it should not be commanded under mortal sin. It may however happen that what in itself is light, may be grave in respect to the community, and by reason of the end, and in this case the command could be given under grave sin, and from it would arise a grave obligation by reason of the end or object on account of which it is imposed. Take, for example, in the case of the Bishop; if he should, in order to avoid some grave evil or some grave danger, forbid the nuns under mortal sin, and in virtue of holy obedience, to go to the parlour or grate at certain times, the Religious, by violating that precept, would sin, even though she knew perfectly well that, otherwise, there would be no sin at all in the matter, and no danger whatever of that happening in her individual case, for which the precept was imposed.

A nun is not bound to accept office when she is very much troubled by scruples, which she cannot overcome, about the care and government of the Convent. That is, under such circumstances she is not bound to obey the command of a Superior ordering her to undertake the duty and office of Abbess or Superioress. And from this a nun may find directions how to act in similar difficulties in accepting or refusing office. Because the duty of Superioress

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\* Bouix.

for a Religious very much troubled by the anxiety of scruples would be too onerous and difficult; and in morals, what is very difficult is equivalent to the impossible, to which no one is bound. And as too much scrupulosity in regard to the Divine Office would exempt one from the obligation of reciting the Canonical Hours; so it should be sufficient to exempt one from the obligation of undertaking the duties of a Superior.

Besides this, no one is bound to obey when it would be to the danger of her own soul, and the detriment of others, as St. Thomas teaches; and both these things would happen if the nun should obey in the case here supposed. First, as to herself, as long as she is thus scrupulous she is exposed to continual anxieties, troubles, and perplexities of mind, and to the consequent danger of falling into many faults and errors. It may be from an erroneous conscience. Secondly, as regards others; as she herself is scrupulous she will be too rigid in her care of the Rule, and too anxious and annoying in seeking after and finding out the faults and transgressions of the nuns, and thus she will show little prudence, little discretion, and be very unmerciful, so that the whole Community and the peace of the Convent will be disturbed and annoyed. What is here said of scruples may be applied to any other unfitness which, under office, would be to the danger of the soul of the Religious and the detriment of the Community.

An Abbess or Superioress can oblige a nun to some duty or function in the Community, notwithstanding a contract or agreement to the contrary made when entering, even though it should be confirmed by the payment of a sum of money; because such a condition is unlawful, since it is against the vow of obedience which should be promised absolutely in regard to all things expressed in the Rules, as all teach with St. Thomas; and hence the aforesaid nun should obey, like all the others of the same Profession, either as Choir or Lay-Sister, and it does not matter in the least whether she has given a large dowry or not. It would not be lawful to claim or grant exemptions on this account.

With regard to *natural secrets*: if the secret be to the injury of the Convent, or a third person, or the Superior herself, or another Superior, even if there were no precept, the Religious would be bound to reveal it by the natural law, which dictates that the common good must be preferred to a particular or individual good. But if the secret is not to the injury of a third party, a nun is not bound to reveal it should the Superioress command her, because the natural law obliges us to keep faith with another when there is no such reason as those I have men-

ioned for breaking it or revealing the natural secret, and superiors should be careful not to encourage the telling of such things, and much more to avoid finding them out.

There are various formulas made use of in precepts obliging under grave sin according to the various Religious Orders. The formulas that are commonly used in precepts binding under pain of mortal sin are:—"In the name of Jesus Christ," "By the power of the Holy Ghost," or "In virtue of holy obedience." The words *I order*, or *command*, or *prohibit*, do not signify or imply the obligation as binding under mortal sin, for such expressions are indifferent to oblige under great or small sin; as is the precept of not stealing or not telling a lie in a great or small matter.

The nature of the obligation of precepts may also be determined by the gravity of the matter, or in Ecclesiastical precepts by the punishment imposed for their violation. If a precept is ordered under a *censure*, that is, when by disobeying the precept, a censure would be incurred, it is known that in such a case it is the mind or will of the Superior to bind under grave sin.

According to Suarez, it does not appear to exceed the power of domination of the Superioress to forbid a Religious to Communicate on a certain day or to be present at the Community exercises, and such like. "These," he says, "and such like punishments, may be imposed on the nuns by the Superioress, if in other respects they are conformable to the Rules or customs, and if they do not exceed the ordinary custom of Religious discipline, they are not, properly speaking, spiritual punishments, but may be reduced to temporal or corporal, after the manner of exile or separation. It may happen, perhaps, that this penance extends to something spiritual, as if one is ordered to stay away from Communion on a certain day, or not to pray at a certain time, but during the time to do some other work as a punishment. These, if ever permitted, are not to be imposed as by *jurisdiction*, but only as certain commands proceeding from the power of domination, and they are not imposed as spiritual privations, but to cause some pain and confusion."

In reflecting over this question it is necessary to distinguish the denial of the Sacraments from the other penances. It is true that to prevent a nun from going to Communion, is to deny her the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and this part of the question is met by Theologians in their solution of the question, "To whom is the Eucharist to be denied?" Biluatt and Theologians generally, answer this question.

1. Public sinners either publicly or privately asking Communion are to be denied.

2. Private sinners asking privately are to be denied, but asking publicly they cannot be denied.

3. Public sinners having privately repented may get Communion in private, but not in public, when reparation would be first needed and when their going publicly to Communion would be likely to cause great scandal.

It would seem that before anyone, whether Secular or Religious should be refused Communion for a fault, that fault should be a grievous sin, and even a Priest cannot refuse Communion except in accordance with the above Theological doctrine. The Superioress, therefore cannot assume to impose this penance without great rashness. How can she know whether the nun is in sin or not, or whether she has repented or not? How can denying the Sacraments be otherwise than the exercise of a spiritual power which the Superioress has not? Only Priests with jurisdiction are, according to the laws of the Church, allowed to exercise this right, and they, before denying Communion must have great reasons, and must understand the soul and conscience of the penitent.

Where such an abuse exists, that is of refusing Holy Communion for small faults, or things that are not sins, such as a want of mortification of the eyes, breaking silence and other such violations of Rule, this abuse should be removed as an odious and unjust assumption of authority, and very disrespectful and irreverent towards the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

A Superioress cannot oblige her nuns to go more frequently or less frequently to Holy Communion, because such a power in the Superioress would be not *for edification* but *for destruction*. Frequent communion depends upon, and is to be regulated by the interior dispositions of the soul, and therefore belongs to the Confessor rather than to the Superioress.

The general rule to be observed in this matter is, that the nuns communicate on the days prescribed by their Rules. Should individual nuns sometimes desire to communicate oftener, this should be with the advice of the Confessor, and also generally speaking, with the consent of the Ordinary. Even in this respect, unless some directions of the kind be observed, great confusion and irregularity might be the result of individual nuns going to Communion when the others do not. This ought only to be done in accordance with the Rules and customs of the Order or Convent, and in other extraordinary cases when souls are specially favoured

by God, and are directed by their Confessor to go more frequently to Communion, having first obtained the permission and consent of the Ordinary in a case where the more frequent Communion is to be regularly established; but, the Bishop's consent is not needed for every particular and individual case. In no case is the Abbess or Superioress to regulate as to whether the nuns should go more or less frequently to Communion.

The following question was asked of the S. Congregation of the Council on the 17th April, 1725. "By whose leave should the nuns be permitted to receive the Holy Eucharist who wish to communicate oftener than the days prescribed by the Rules and Constitutions?"

The answer given was: The leave of the ordinary Confessor.

In speaking of the extent of the power to be exercised by the Superioress, it may be added 1. That she cannot bless publicly as this belongs to the spiritual *power of the Keys*, but she may do so privately, as any father or mother or good old person may bless. Neither can she, properly speaking, preach, but there is no law which forbids her to give exhortations and instructions to her nuns in Chapter, etc., as to the observance of the Rule and regular discipline.

In conclusion, let us note that all Religious live under the two-fold power of *domination* and *jurisdiction*, and that in their exercise of this power Superiors should be regulated and guided by paternal or maternal (as the case may be) mildness and kindness. Let all Superiors remember that whatever power they possess over their subjects has its origin from the spontaneous offering up on the part of the Religious of their wills for God, by which, through the vow of obedience, they have sacrificed themselves entirely to Him, and are, therefore, to be treated, not as servants or inferiors, but as voluntary and loving children. Jurisdiction and all spiritual power emanates from Jesus Christ, who by His life and teaching, and under the figure of the Good Shepherd, shows us how His sheep, or the members of His flock, have to be watched over and fed.

The subjects should obey in all things that are not *contra Deum, vel contra Regulam*, against God or the Rules. This belongs to the perfection of obedience and not to its obligation alone, which extends to those things only which the Superior commands, according to Rule. This is the teaching of St. Thomas of Aquin.\*

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\* 2. 2. q. 104, a. 5.



## CHAPTER IX.

## THE VIRTUE OF OBEDIENCE.

In treating on Religious Obedience, it is well to distinguish the *virtue* from the *vow*. So far we have considered the *vow* and its obligations, and now we come to consider the *virtue* of obedience and its perfection.

The virtue of obedience is that disposition or quality of the soul which inclines it to obey the commands of Superiors. This definition signifies that obedience, like the other virtues, is composed of two elements, namely: (1) The object or the matter about which it is exercised, and (2) the motive that leads the mind to that object.

St. Thomas teaches that obedience is a special virtue, and its special object is a precept or command expressed or implied.\*

The command to be the object of obedience must be just, and it must come from a legitimate Superior. The will of the Superior, in whatever manner it may be manifested, is a kind of tacit precept, and the virtue is the more prompt by anticipating the express command, having first ascertained the Superior's will.

For the better understanding of this object of obedience, Fr. Cajetan, in his notes on the *Summa*, gives the following explanation:—

"In the disposition of human life, according to the body, some food is contrary to life, as poison. Some diminishes that which constitutes the integrity of life, as the food that is injurious either to the eyes or the stomach; and other food is in no way injurious, but its omission renders a man more active and his life easier. The same happens in those things which have to be done or omitted for the obtaining of eternal life. Certain things are ordained as necessary for eternal life, and these are precepts binding under mortal sin, as, for example, the Sixth Commandment, etc. Certain other things are ordained not as necessary for eternal life, but as appertaining to the integrity of the spiritual life of the soul, as are the precepts that oblige under venial sin, as, for example, not to use an idle word; for venial sin does not take away eternal life, but only impairs the integrity of the life of the soul tending towards eternal life. And other things are ordained as contributing towards or promoting eternal life, and

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\* 2 2 Qu. 104.

these are the counsels which do not oblige (in one who has not professed them), and whether they are fulfilled or not do not bring about anything unlawful, as, for example, to observe celibacy, to enter Religion, and the like. Between precepts and counsels, therefore, there is this difference, that every precept imposes a necessity, but in a different way; because a precept obliging under a mortal sin imposes the necessity of eternal life; that under venial sin imposes the necessity of the integrity of the spiritual life, leading to eternal life, but the counsels impose no necessity. And because they are disobedient who are unwilling to obey a Superior in those things that are necessary to be done, and they are obedient who obey, not only in those things that are necessary for eternal life but in all statutes whose omission is unlawful; so the object of obedience or disobedience is a precept properly so called as distinguished from counsel.

The difference between the virtue and the vow of obedience explains the motive of obedience. For the virtue differs from the vow; 1st, in regard to the motive proper to each. The motive of the virtue of obedience is that justice which requires that an inferior should be subject to lawful Superiors; the motive of the vow is *religion*, which demands due honour to be given to God so that the promise made to Him to obey Superiors, who command in His name, be faithfully kept.

2nd. They differ also in regard to the matter or object of obedience. The virtue has for its object all the just commands of Superiors whatever they may be, or whatever the authority be, which enjoins them. Thus a child should practise the virtue of obedience towards parents, a servant to a master, a subject to a king, and all Christians to the Church. The vow has for its object all that the Superior commands according to the extent of the promise made to God by vow, and within the limits of that engagement or contract. For one does not promise *by vow* to fulfil all precepts, natural or positive, divine and human.

3rd. The virtue obliges us independently of our own will in regard to the relations of superiors and inferiors, and these relations are not left to our own will to determine; but all the obligations of the vow of obedience are fully taken upon oneself, and are the result of the free abandonment which a Religious makes in submitting herself to the will of another.

4th. The virtue can be practised by interior acts, it is susceptible of more or less perfection in respect both to the matter or object and the disposition with which one obeys. The matter of the vow is always determined and always obligatory, so that one

breaks it or not according as she consents to or intends its object or not, although in its accomplishment the motive may be more or less pure or its violation may be more or less grievous.

With regard to the perfection of the virtue of obedience and its degrees—three things, according to St. Thomas, may be considered in the formal fulfilment of a law or of a precept.

1st. The material accomplishment or execution of what is commanded.

2ndly. The will with which it is executed.

3rdly. The judgment which approves of it.

These are the three elements which constitute an act of obedience properly so called.

Under these three respects our obedience may be more or less perfect, that is, as regards the object or matter, and as regards the manner of obeying. In regard to the matter, all things of counsel, even though not commanded, and points of Rule, though not binding under sin, may be the object of the perfection of obedience; and also in regard to the manner the perfection of obedience may be considered both on the part of the will and the judgment, as also the motive of our obedience.\*

We may, therefore, consider three grades of perfection in Religious obedience.

1st. To execute what is commanded.

2nd. Obedience of the will—to wish with the Superior, that is, not simply to do the thing, but to do it willingly and lovingly.

3rd. Obedience of the intellect,—that is, not merely to do the thing and do it willingly, but judge that it is the right thing for us to do at the time.

*1st Degree.* External obedience, or to execute what is commanded. There can be no obedience at all without this, as is evident. It should, however, be like the manner of acting of the obedient man described by St. Bernard. "He does not know what it is to delay and put off the business till to-morrow; he is an enemy to all kinds of demurs; he prevents his Superior and even gets the start of his commands. His eyes and ears are ever open to the least sign given him; all his other senses and every part of him faithfully wait the motion of his Superior. He does what he is bidden. Goes where he is commanded, and is always ready to receive and execute every order of obedience."

This exterior obedience should extend not only to the orders of a Superior, but also to the least sign or intimation of her

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\* Rodriguez Christian Perfection, Chap. 3, Obedience.

will. The obedience, according to St. Thomas, is the more perfect which prevents the Superior's commands, after having once known her will *his eyes and ears are ever open to the least sign given him.*

This exterior obedience should be prompt, that is, to attend to the call of obedience with such promptness as to leave a word or letter unfinished. Rodriguez gives examples to show how pleasing this promptness in obedience is in the sight of God: the monk who on his return found the letter finished in gold: the saint who found the Infant Jesus grown to man's stature: the other who found the Infant Jesus whom she had left, in order to obey, awaiting her on her return. The ancient monks were so exact on this point that several hundred of them were able to live in perfect order and harmony under one Superior. St. Basil says:—"A monk should not have power over himself, not even for one moment." Signifying that he should be always in the hands of God and at the disposal of obedience.

The execution of the command to be perfect should be also entire; that is, it should embrace the whole command, and to its full extent, without any curtailing or limitation.

It should be strong and generous, not half-hearted or discouraged by obstacles or difficulties.

It ought to be constant that is to continue without interruption as long as the command or will of the Superior lasts.\*

Rodriguez, quoting St. Ignatius, explains that under this head he gave three sorts of obedience.

"The first is when we comply with the precept of obedience, and this we are obliged to do.

"The second when we do a thing for the least word's speaking. This obedience is more perfect than the other, for he that obeys at a word is certainly more humble and submissive than he who waits for a command in virtue of holy obedience.

"The third is when we perform the Superior's will upon the least sign of it being manifested, and without our being spoken to. The Saint adds that this last is the most perfect obedience of the three, and most grateful to God. A servant who upon the least hint given him sets himself to work, certainly pleases his master better than another who will do nothing without being desired. So in Religion; she who is ready to obey upon the least sign given her of her Superior's will, is most agreeable to God and Superiors. And St. Thomas says that our know-

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\* Gautrelet, *Traite de L'Etat Religieux*, Vol. II., p. 55.

ledge of the Superior's will is a tacit order, and that our performance of it then, is a proof of prompt obedience.”\*

*2nd Degree. Obedience of the Will.*

It consists in an entire conformity of our will to that of our Superior. St. John Climacus calls obedience *the tomb of our will, wherein it lies dead and from which humility rises again.* This obedience makes the Religious—

1st. To obey *formally*, in order to accomplish the will of the Superior, or better still the will of God.

2nd. To obey without voluntary repugnance and without any opposition to the command. This does not mean that we may not *feel* pain and repugnance, because feelings are not always voluntary or under our own control, and in the case of obedience to act against them freely and voluntarily would serve to increase our merit.

3rd. To obey with love of the things commanded, and for those who commanded them. This love need not be natural love, which would rather take away from than add to the merit of obedience, but that one love the things commanded, because they are commanded, and afford the opportunity of exercising the virtue of obedience. The affection should not be confounded with the motive, and, in regard to Superiors, natural affection should not be allowed to influence our obedience, or to take away from its merit. And in this it may be well to remember the words of St. Jerome :—

“You should fear the Superior as a master, but love him as a father.”

4. To obey with humility, without grumbling or complaining, or any manifestation of stubbornness.

5. To obey with courage and constancy.

These are the signs by which we may know that we are doing the will of God and not our own. If we act for God our conduct will be uniform in everything and towards every Superior.

In obedience, we are admonished to guard against our own will slipping slyly in, lest before the judgment seat of Christ it should be answered us in the words of Isaias: *Why have we fasted and thou hast not regarded: Have we humbled our souls and thou hast not taken notice. Behold in the day of your fast your own will is found.* We are also admonished against making the Superior do our will.—What a sad state of things it would be if a Superior should have to ask her Religious, “What

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\* Rodrig. Obedience, Chap. 13.

"will you that I order you?" She may never have to ask the question so explicitly, yet when she has to refrain from ordering through fear of the manner in which her mandate may be received, or prefer doing the thing herself rather than ask an unwilling subject, it is something like having to find out what such Religious wish before asking them to obey.

Here it may be asked how are we to consider God in the person of the Superior, and that in obeying her we obey God?

We take the answer from Suarez, who treats this subject very fully:—

1st. The Superior may have no more of God's gifts or graces than anybody else, and is no more God in reality than anybody else.

2nd. The Superior is not to be considered infallible.

3rd. The motive of obeying should always be the *will of God*, as made known by the Superior, and in this there can be no difficulty or error.

4th. For the perfection of obedience, it is necessary always to act through some such motive, although for the obligation of the vow, all that is required is that we execute the work, even though the motive be only human.

*3rd Grade.—The Obedience of the Intellect.*—This is called blind obedience. It does not mean that the Religious should deprive herself of every act of judgment or of the intellect as to the lawfulness or unlawfulness of the thing commanded, that would be idiotic obedience. For it may happen that a Superior should command something unlawful, and to obey in this case would not be perfection but a sin. Neither is the blind obedience spoken of by the Saints to be understood in this sense, that subjects must believe their Superiors infallible, and all their judgments true, just, and correct.

It means, however, that the subject, when the thing is harmless and not unreasonably commanded, should abstain from all judgment in the matter by which to declare it unreasonable, and that she abstain also from asking the *why* and the *wherefore* of an evidently just command; and in this, it belongs to the perfection of obedience to conform our judgment to the judgment of our Superiors.

This conformity of our judgment and submission of our intellect is the highest kind of obedience, the obedience which is better than sacrifice, for it is the most perfect sacrifice we can make for God.

The conversion of St. Paul, and the direction given him by God may be regarded as an example of this kind of perfect

obedience. It is as it were the *form* of Religious obedience, that with our open eyes we see nothing, and judge nothing, but allowing ourselves to be led by Superiors and rest on them alone after God, for the direction of our actions; this is the most secure way of conforming ourselves to the *divine will*. It is for this reason that St. John Climacus advises us to reject thoughts against obedience or the orders of the Superiors, with the same horror and swiftness as thoughts against faith or against purity. St. Jerome tells us on this subject, "Not to judge the opinion of Superiors. They see many things which subjects do not, and did subjects understand all the circumstances and reasons which Superiors have to consider, they would be slow to condemn or censure them."

There may be one or two objections to this grade of obedience, namely, the obedience of the intellect.

1st. Really it seems too much to give up our judgment entirely; for we cannot close our eyes to the fact, that some Superiors have commanded foolish things, for example, planting cabbages with the roots up, carrying water in a sieve, etc. How can anyone be persuaded that these things are proper, or submit their own judgment to that manner of planting cabbages or carrying water?

It was not the best way of planting cabbages, and the carrying, or attempting to carry, water in that manner was simply ridiculous; but, at the same time, the Religious, knowing that these things were without sin, could easily submit his judgment to the doing of them as manifestations of the Superior's will, and of the divine will, in ordaining that these acts of humility and obedience and submission should be meritorious, if performed in this spirit.

2nd. It may be said that, although we obey yet we have a right to our own opinion. Let us remember in answer to this, that we had a right to many things that we sacrificed for God, and it is pleasing to Him to sacrifice even our own opinion for the sake of submission and obedience.

Besides, what may appear foolish to our minds, may not be so in the sight of God. The action commanded may be ridiculous and foolish, and yet the Superior may have some good end in view, some spiritual advantage, such as to give an opportunity to the subject of practising humility and self-abnegation.

Rodriguez says: \* "Your obedience can never be a holocaust

unless you submit your understanding as well as your will, nor, can it be entire or perfect as long as you fail to sacrifice your judgment, which is the noblest power of the soul." This made St. Ignatius say that, those who submit their will but not their judgment to the Superior's orders, have only one foot in Religion.

In concluding this chapter I would ask Religious to bear in mind :—

1st. That the retention of any portion of their own will is, so far, a denial of their vocation and at variance with it. Disobedience does an injury to Community life and to the strength of the whole body.

2ndly. Disobedience hinders the spirit and the progress of any Congregation, and no good can be expected from those whose spirits are divided between God and themselves, and who make the cloister the abode of self-will.

3rdly. If self-will had been allowed to govern Institutes from their beginning, their fruits would not now be seen, and destruction would long since have descended upon them.

Let, therefore, our obedience be *internal, universal, and uniform*. Let us remember that in doing the will of the Superior we do the will of God.

Let us recognise the Superior as the representative of God and in her orders the will of God, and in this manner, we may hope to have the perfection of obedience, and with it, the perfect union and conformity of our souls and our wills with the will of God, in which the perfection of all sanctity consists.

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## CHAPTER X.

### THE CESSATION OF THE OBLIGATION OF RELIGIOUS VOWS.

The obligation of the vows made in Religion may cease entirely or in part in one or other of the following ways:

1. By nullification or invalidation. 2. By dispensation. 3. By commutation.

#### I.—INVALIDATION OF VOWS.

By the nullification or invalidation of a vow is meant the making it null and void. This may be done *directly* by invalidating the act itself, or *indirectly* by removing the matter from under vow, or causing it to be unlawful to observe it in future.



Speaking of vows only in as far as they affect Religious, the power of nullifying them belongs to the Superiors who have what is called the *dominative* power over them, that is, power over the wills of their subjects. Hence, the Superiors may *directly* nullify any vows taken by their Religious subjects after their profession. They have not the power of nullifying the substantial vows of Religion or the vows of profession, if there be any added to the usual three vows, such as, the vow of perseverance, or of teaching, or of enclosure or promoting devotion to the Passion of Our Lord, etc. Neither can they render null and void the vow of entering a stricter Order.

The Pope can nullify all the vows taken by Religious, but not the vows of Seculars.

An Abbess or Prioress can invalidate the vows of her subjects, in so far, as their observance would interfere with the domestic rule and government of the Convent.

Regular Prelates can *indirectly* nullify the vows of Novices whether taken in the world or after their reception, when such vows are an impediment to their direction and their Religious mode of life.

Those who have power thus to nullify vows may do so *validly*, even in cases, where subjects have made them with the permission of their respective Superiors.

The *direct* nullification removes entirely the obligation of the vows so that it never afterwards revives. The *indirect* only suspends its execution and the obligation revives afterwards, when their observance no longer interferes with other rights. Thus a Novice leaving and going out into the world, again comes under the obligation which may have been suspended during the noviceship.\*

Both the *direct* and *indirect* nullification are valid even without a cause, and also lawful in regard to vows made without the consent of Superiors. But it would be unlawful to nullify a vow made with due permission, without some just cause for so doing.

To be more explicit, I may state that the Superiors who can nullify vows, in the sense above explained are the General, the Provincial and the Local Superiors, but in such a way, that a lesser Superior cannot nullify vows made with the permission of a higher Superior.

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\* Note.—Superiores regulares non possunt hujusmodi vota irritare directe, quia nondum habent potestatem dominativam in eos qui illa emiserunt, sed possunt illa irritare indirecte, quando nempe et quatenus impediunt gubernium Conventus, et hoc etiam intelligitur de votis Papæ reservatis, sed non de voto ingrediendi Religionem strictiorem.—Craisson No. 307a.

This doctrine applies to all Religious Orders and Congregations whether their vows be solemn or simple, but as I have said before, it does not apply to the three substantial vows of Religion, or any others that may be taken at profession according to the Rules of the Institute, but only to the private vows of Religious.

## II.—DISPENSATION OF VOWS.

The obligation of a vow may be taken away by dispensation. To dispense in a vow is to condone or forgive its obligation in the name of God.

In regard to *solemn* vows it is now commonly taught that the Sovereign Pontiff, for a very grave cause, can dispense in *solemn* vows either of S. Orders or Religion. This is proved 1st, from the teaching that the whole solemnity of the vow is derived from Ecclesiastical law which can be made or unmade by Papal authority, and if you take away the solemnity then the vow becomes *simple* from which the Pope can certainly dispense. 2ndly, it is proved from Ecclesiastical history that the Pope has done so in some rare cases and for very important reasons. This dispensation from solemn vows can be granted only by the Sovereign Pontiff.\*

St. Francis de Sales says: "It is true one can be dispensed from simple vows and from the others also, though more easily from those than from these, but not without grave occasion and when it is expedient. Here the Jesuit Fathers are in an extremely good position and maintain the lustre of their most illustrious company by this means, which the world does not approve, but God and the Church do highly. And all Religious Orders in ancient times were of that kind, solemnity of vows having been established but a few hundreds of years."† In regard to *simple* vows taken in an Institute approved by the Holy See, no one but the Sovereign Pontiff can dispense from them; the same has to be said of any Order or Congregation where there is a vow or promise of perseverance made and received by the Superior in the name of the Institute. No one, in such a case can free the Religious from her vows except the Pope, unless the Order consents. Such a dispensation would be to the injury of a third party, namely, the Institute to which the Religious belongs and with which she has entered into a contract at her Profession.

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\* Note see Craisson No. 3064 and 3068.

† Letters to persons in Religion, BK. II. Let. 30.

Hence Benedict XIV. in the Constitution *Convocatis*\* admonishes Confessors as to these vows, "that they should abstain from commuting these vows in which injury would result to a third party; wherefore in what appertains to vows . . . even though only simple or vows of perseverance, or others that are usually taken in Religious Congregations, let them not interfere." No one but the Pope or those to whom the Pope delegates this special power (as he does in some cases to the Superiors-General of Religious Orders of men in regard to their own subjects) can grant a dispensation from these vows. And the Holy See does not approve of the Rules and Constitutions of nuns except under the condition that the dispensation from the vows of the Institute be reserved to the Apostolic See.† Also there is a declaration of the S. Congregation of the 17th July, 1858, wherein it is stated as one of the conditions requisite for these simple vows of Religion, that this dispensation be reserved to the Roman Pontiff.

Dispensation from vows is an act of spiritual jurisdiction, and, on this account, it is a power which cannot be possessed by Abbesses, Mothers-General, or Rev. Mothers of Convents. The following teaching therefore is not so much for them as for Religious in general, those who may require dispensation and those who can grant it to them.

*Regular Prelates*, known as *exempt*, can dispense Novices from the vows they have taken in the world or during the Novitiate except the vows reserved to the Pope, such as the vow of perpetual chastity.‡ The vow of entering a stricter Institute is not reserved to the Pope, and it may also be dispensed with by the Regular Prelates, inasmuch as they possess Ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Novices.

As to private vows taken after Profession by individual Religious, the same rule applies to them as to the Novices.

Religious *not exempt* have not this power by the ordinary Canon Law, but they may have it by some special delegation or privilege.

From the vows of Religion and of the Religious Profession, even though only *simple*, the Sovereign Pontiff alone can dispense, but he often delegates this power to the Superior-General of the Order or Congregation.

\* Anni. 1750.

† *Vide* Analecta 42, liv. Col. 509.

‡ The five vows reserved to the Pope are :—

1. The absolute and perpetual vow of chastity.
2. The vow to enter a Religious Order.
3. The vow of pilgrimage to Jerusalem ; 4. To Rome ; 5. To Compostello.

This dispensation cannot be given by these Superiors without grave reasons, as this is a matter of so great importance, which relates to God and which concerns in a serious manner both the Religious Institute and the individual Religious. The consent of the Institute would not be sufficient for this dispensation unless founded on good and solid reasons; and much less would the will of the Superior alone be regarded as a sufficient reason. Because there is a species of contract entered into by the Religious who make their vows and the Institute that receives them, in such a way that the Religious cannot leave without a just cause, and the Institute cannot send them away or grant them a dispensation without a just and sufficient cause. These are sacred engagements that cannot be easily broken on one side or on the other. From this it follows:—

1. If a dispensation be granted without a just cause it is null and void. Both the Religious receiving it, and the Superior who grants it are guilty of sin. The dispensation has no effect whatever, and the Religious is still bound by the vows.

2. If a Religious should obtain a dispensation from vows, as a consequence of some grave fault committed with the object and intention of being set free from her Religious engagements, the dispensation may be valid and just on the part of her Superiors, but the Religious violates her obligations in wilfully provoking the dissolution of her vows, and she is bound to do all in her power to get the dispensation revoked, or to gain admission into another Convent.

3. If the dispensation be granted consequent on some grave fault committed, not with the intention of being freed from her vows, the dispensation would be valid and just, both on the part of the Superior and the Religious subject who is dispensed; but she should try to regain admission, or to enter another Convent, so that she may correspond to her Religious vocation.

It may sometimes happen that the reasons assigned are not sufficient in themselves to justify the individual in obtaining a dispensation; they may, however, be sufficient to move the judgment of the Superior to grant it, especially if other reasons are connected with it, such as the inconstancy of the will, the danger of scandal to others, the want of love for the Institute and its work, etc. Those dispensed in good faith are free from the obligation of their vows, and, in obtaining the dispensation, they have not violated their vows. Those dispensed through their own fault, but not with their own design, have no further obligation in connection with their vows, but to correspond to the grace of their

Religious vocation which I suppose them to retain. Those, again, who are dispensed, even in bad faith, through their own fault and design, are really dispensed from the obligation of the vows, for the Institute has very good reasons to rid itself of them, but the obligations indicated above remain, namely, to re-enter if they can, or to enter another Institute. These have sinned by thus obtaining their dispensation from their vows.\*

### III.—THE COMMUTATION OF VOWS.

The obligation of a vow may cease by that which is called *commutation*, that is, by the substitution of some other good work for that which has already been promised or vowed. This can be done by all those who have the power of dispensing from the vows.

This kind of change in regard to the vows of Religion may be considered under different circumstances. One may leave an Institute in which she has made her vows to enter another, either less perfect and whose Rule is less strict; or to enter an Institute equally perfect; or one more perfect and more strict; and each of these cases must be considered.

1. A passing or changing to a more lax and less perfect Institute is forbidden by the Council of Trent.† “Let no Regular by virtue of any faculty,” it says, “be transferred to a more lax Religious Institute.” For this a Pontifical Indult would be required, although some hold that this would be, when no cause existed, but that with a cause the leave of the Prelate would suffice. According to this, no nun or monk can leave their Order or Institute to enter another that is less perfect and less strict.

2. To pass to an equally perfect and strict Institute does not seem to be specially forbidden. It should not, however, be done without a just cause, even with the permission of the Superiors, but the Sovereign Pontiff can permit it without a cause, inasmuch as all Religious Institutes are under his government.

3. To pass to a stricter Institute is, according to the ordinary

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\* Gautrelet, *Traite de l'Etat Religieux*, Vol. II. p. 132.

Note 1. Dispensans et petens dispensationem in voto sine justa causa peccant mortaliter, sicut et negans, quando adest causa justa. (Ex Sporer apud A. Goritia.)

2. Item nemo potest dispensare vel commutare votum, cujus dispensatio vel commutatio vergeret in prejudicium tertii; hinc nequit dispensari promissio facta de danda eleemosyna v.g. Ecclesiæ, vel pauperi ab his acceptata nisi hi remittant et condonent jus acquisitum.

† Sess. 25, chap. 19.

law of the Church, quite lawful. This is proved from the Constitution of Innocent III.\* "This transfer," he says, should not be denied to him who is led to ask for it with humility and purity of intention, that he may not feignedly (*ficta*) but really pass to the pasture of a better life. "Such an one," says the Pontiff, "after he has asked the permission to pass to a stricter life from his Prelate, may freely carry out his resolution notwithstanding any indiscreet opposition on the part of the Prelate." Prelates themselves are excepted. "Let no one," says the same Pontiff, "presume under any occasion to forsake the Prelacy."

By a decree of Urban VIII. it is stated that no one should be permitted to pass to a stricter order, unless it is known to the Superior that that other Order is ready and willing to receive her.

To pass to a stricter Order without asking permission is unlawful, and according to many invalid. St. Liguori considers it very probable that it is valid, as the law is silent as to its nullity.

I have said that by the ordinary law it is permitted to Religious to pass to a stricter Institute, and according to the above Constitution of Innocent III. it appears that this can be done freely after the permission is asked, even if it be not granted. But by particular laws, almost all the Religious Institutes have a privilege by which this transfer cannot be effected without the permission being granted. And when the Superiors of the Institute are unwilling, then the permission of the Holy See is required. Superiors may sometimes have very good reasons to be unwilling to part with a useful and worthy subject.

Nuns solemnly professed cannot without the permission of the Holy See be transferred to another Institute, nor even to another Convent, in case of Pontifical Enclosure.

The question may be asked, how can it be known whether one Institute is stricter than another?

This is a difficult question. All are agreed that the *contemplative* life is to be placed before the *active*, but it is disputed whether it is before the *mixed*. St. Thomas teaches that the *mixed*, namely, that which combines both the *contemplative* and *active* is the more perfect kind of life, as it is more conformable to the life of Christ.

To know whether a particular Institute is more perfect, or more strict than another, one should attend, not so much to its primary institution as to its actual state.

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\* Anni 1212.

An Order is more perfect according as its proximate end and object is more excellent and more universal; as, for example, one's own perfection, and at the same time that of our neighbour; the spiritual or corporal assistance of others, &c. These and many other things have to be considered.

Then, again, an Order is more perfect according to the more efficacious means which it affords for obtaining the end in view. It does not always follow, that the Order is the more perfect in which the stricter poverty is observed, the greater solitude, the more severe corporal austerity, the more prolonged prayer; these are the means. The end also must be considered, and great attention should be given as to how the Rules are observed. When all things else are equal, it may be said that the Order is the more perfect in which there is the stricter poverty, the greater austerity, and the more exact silence. The austerity of an Order has to be estimated, not so much by external mortification as by the internal mortification of the will and judgment, the practice of humility, the overcoming the passions, &c.

It is generally agreed that the Carthusians are the most strict of all, notwithstanding what has been said as to the tests by which one Order may be judged stricter than another. In practice, the difficulty in deciding whether one Order is more perfect than another is removed, when we consider that the permission to pass from one to the other must be obtained from the Religious Superiors or from the Holy See; and it is for them, not for the individual Religious to decide in each particular case and to take into account the position, the end, and object of both Institutes. The application for this permission should be made either to the Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, or to the Congregation of the Council, or to the Penitentiaria.

In the case of nuns, as a general rule, their dowry should go with them, especially if the second Convent, be unwilling to receive the nun without it. But, in this, we have to be guided by the special Statutes of each Religious Institute.

Benedict XIV., speaking of the *Greater Penitentiaria* in regard to the transfer of a Religious from one Institute to another, says: "As to the transfer from one Religion to another, not only can it grant it from a *laxer* to a *stricter* (Institute), according to Chapter *Licet* (de Regular), but also to an *equal*, and from a *stricter* to a *laxer*; but, for just and grave reasons, according to the respective Orders—reasons to be approved by the said Penitentiaria, having heard first the Superior of the Order from which the Religious is being transferred, as well as the Superior

of the Order to which he is going. This transfer should not be granted to Orders where the claustral and regular Observance is not kept."

It can grant a transfer, for a just reason, to nuns outside of Italy; but in this case, executing and approving it in writing and committing the faculty for the transfer to be admitted and executed by the Ordinary, with the proper clauses, according to the variety of the cases.\*

Besides nullification, dispensation, and commutation of vows, there is also another means to which Superiors must have recourse sometimes in relieving subjects of their obligations, namely, *expulsion*.

It is not necessary to go fully into this matter, as it is not a subject of much edification. It ought to be a last resource for the remedy of evils. And in a serious matter of this kind some things should be observed by the Superiors who pronounce the sentence of expulsion, the Religious who is sent away, and the members of the Institute from which she is sent away.

1. He who is charged to pronounce sentence of expulsion (this is always an Ecclesiastical Prelate, who has spiritual jurisdiction in the matter), should be deeply impressed with the responsibility and gravity of his action, and he should employ every means to ensure its justice. He should, therefore, have recourse to God, the Father of light, and pray and have prayers said for his intention. He should take counsel with the prudent in a matter of so much importance, both to the Religious soul, the Religious Institute, and the honour of God. He should carefully consider the reasons for the step which he is about to take. Above all, he should employ every other means and remedy to prevent the sad necessity of separating a Religious from her Community and sending her out into the world.

2. As to the Religious who is sent away. She should be preserved against shame or disgrace in the eyes of the world. She should retain for the Religious House sentiments of benevolence and charity, and that this may be the case, she should receive on her leaving every possible consideration and consolation. She should be directed and advised in the choice of her subsequent mode of life, in such a manner as to secure her against exposing to danger her eternal salvation. In fine, she should be assisted not only by counsels and prayers, but by all the temporal means which charity may suggest.

3. In regard to the Religious Community, care should be taken

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\*Cralson, 3100.



that no inquietude or dissatisfaction be left in the minds of the Religious. And the Superiors, in case of need, might explain the causes which necessitated this measure, but the faults should not be made known unless they were public. Each Religious in the Community should guard against any uncharitable judgments or opinions concerning those who have gone away. On the contrary, they should have great compassion for them, and it is their duty to love them in the Lord and to pray the divine Majesty to watch over and protect them. Let the example of the ex-Religious serve as a warning to the negligent and careless, that they may be moved to correct their faults, lest they should meet with a like misfortune.

*Apostacy from Religion.*—This is an unlawful way of escaping from obedience, and getting free from the Religious obligations.

Apostacy in general is a desertion or falling away from God, or from something good in which one is bound either by precept or by vow to persevere. Apostacy may be either from the *faith*, or from *S. Orders* or from *Religion*. It is of the last I here speak.

Apostacy from Religion is, "a guilty desertion from Religion with the intention of not returning again, even if the habit be retained."

It is disputed whether she should be considered an Apostate who would desert a stricter Institute to enter a lax one. Suarez holds the affirmative opinion, but Ferraris denies it.

Although fugitives, who without leave go away with the intention of returning, differ from Apostates, they are however, equivalent to them as far as the law of the Church goes in dealing with them. Apostates from Religion, if they put off the habit are excommunicated. In the case of men who are in *S. Orders*, they are, by the very fact of Apostacy, suspended from their Orders, and if they should exercise them during the Apostacy they would become *irregular*. Apostates during the time are deprived of the privileges of the Religious State.

In the case of Apostates from *solemn* vows, it is said that Superiors should try to find them out, to recall them, and, as far as possible, to procure their return. In the case of *simple* vows, Apostates, by their sin, deserve expulsion from the Institute, and are usually expelled and not admitted back.

According to the Bull *Ascendente* of Gregory XIII., the penalties of the Church concerning Apostates affect Religious not only with *solemn* vows, but also those Religious who have taken *simple* vows in an Institute approved by the Holy See.

*Perseverance.*—From all that has been said in this chapter and in former chapters on the vows, it follows that Religious are

obliged to persevere in the Institute in which they have made their vows. This obligation supposes two things: (1) To keep the vows; (2) To keep them in the Institute in which one is professed.

That a nun is obliged to keep her vows, is a truth admitted by the whole world, but the question arises. If, consequent on taking a vow, a circumstance should occur which, had it been foreseen, she would not have taken it, would she then be bound to keep her vow?

In answering this, it is necessary to distinguish the different kinds of vows. If there is question of *simple* vows, which are not vows of chastity and Religion, she would be exempt from the obligation of keeping them under such circumstances.

In regard to the vow of chastity, according to St. Liguori, this principle cannot be applied, because, as he says in this case, many would find excuses for exempting themselves from the obligation of this vow. Their dispositions, their weakness, their bad habits or the temptations of the evil spirit would deceive them into pretexts for exempting themselves from their obligations.

As to *simple* vows taken in Religion; there is yet another reason opposed to removing the obligation of vows, on account of any accidental circumstances or causes that arise after profession. By profession an onerous contract is entered into, between the Institute and its members. This contract cannot be dissolved except by the consent of both parties, and for grave reasons, amongst which we cannot reckon circumstances that do not affect the substance of the act, or that leave it in its full intrinsic force and vigour. These reasons apply also to *solemn* vows, and to them is added another, namely, the irrevocable manner in which the *solemn* vows are received by the Church.

2. It is also certain that a nun is obliged to keep her vows in the Institute in which she has made her profession. The Religious at profession vows obedience according to the Rules and Constitutions of the Institute, therefore she is bound to persevere in that Institute. In some Institutes the vow of perseverance is explicitly made. It is, however, included in the vow of obedience. This cannot be kept according to the Rules and Constitution of the Institute if one abandons that Institute.

The Church, therefore, looks upon it as a sin in a Religious to leave her Institute without the consent of the Institute, and the authority which can grant the necessary permission; and it is known as the sin of apostacy from Religion.

The obligation of perseverance as here explained, applies to all Orders and Congregations approved by the Church in which perpetual vows are taken.

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered.

2. The second step is to gather relevant information and data.

3. The third step is to analyze the information and data to identify patterns and trends.

4. The fourth step is to develop a hypothesis or solution based on the analysis.

5. The fifth step is to test the hypothesis or solution through experimentation or observation.

6. The sixth step is to evaluate the results of the test and determine if the hypothesis or solution is valid.

7. The seventh step is to communicate the findings of the study to the relevant audience.

8. The eighth step is to reflect on the process and identify areas for improvement.

9. The ninth step is to apply the findings of the study to real-world situations.

10. The tenth step is to continue to monitor and evaluate the results of the study over time.

11. The eleventh step is to share the findings of the study with the wider community.

12. The twelfth step is to use the findings of the study to inform future research and practice.

13. The thirteenth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used ethically and responsibly.

14. The fourteenth step is to maintain transparency and accountability throughout the research process.

15. The fifteenth step is to acknowledge the limitations of the study and the potential for bias.

16. The sixteenth step is to provide a clear and concise summary of the findings of the study.

17. The seventeenth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are accessible to the relevant audience.

18. The eighteenth step is to provide a clear and concise conclusion to the study.

19. The nineteenth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used to inform future research and practice.

20. The twentieth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used ethically and responsibly.

21. The twenty-first step is to maintain transparency and accountability throughout the research process.

22. The twenty-second step is to acknowledge the limitations of the study and the potential for bias.

23. The twenty-third step is to provide a clear and concise summary of the findings of the study.

24. The twenty-fourth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are accessible to the relevant audience.

25. The twenty-fifth step is to provide a clear and concise conclusion to the study.

26. The twenty-sixth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used to inform future research and practice.

27. The twenty-seventh step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used ethically and responsibly.

28. The twenty-eighth step is to maintain transparency and accountability throughout the research process.

29. The twenty-ninth step is to acknowledge the limitations of the study and the potential for bias.

30. The thirtieth step is to provide a clear and concise summary of the findings of the study.

31. The thirty-first step is to ensure that the findings of the study are accessible to the relevant audience.

32. The thirty-second step is to provide a clear and concise conclusion to the study.

33. The thirty-third step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used to inform future research and practice.

34. The thirty-fourth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used ethically and responsibly.

35. The thirty-fifth step is to maintain transparency and accountability throughout the research process.

36. The thirty-sixth step is to acknowledge the limitations of the study and the potential for bias.

37. The thirty-seventh step is to provide a clear and concise summary of the findings of the study.

38. The thirty-eighth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are accessible to the relevant audience.

39. The thirty-ninth step is to provide a clear and concise conclusion to the study.

40. The fortieth step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used to inform future research and practice.

41. The forty-first step is to ensure that the findings of the study are used ethically and responsibly.

42. The forty-second step is to maintain transparency and accountability throughout the research process.

**PART III.**

**THE PRINCIPAL SPIRITUAL DUTIES OF  
THEIR STATE.**



# PART III.

## THE PRINCIPAL SPIRITUAL DUTIES OF THEIR STATE.

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### CHAPTER I.

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#### ON THE OBLIGATION AND MANNER OF RECITING THE DIVINE OFFICE AND THE LITTLE OFFICE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Nuns with solemn vows and Enclosure are for the most part accustomed to recite the Canonical Hours or the Divine Office. This is the case with the Poor Clares, the Carmelites, the Benedictine and Augustinian nuns. &c. The Presentation nuns, although they profess solemn vows, and almost all nuns who have only simple vows, and those who are not bound to Enclosure say the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin, as for example, the Sisters of Charity, Sisters of Mercy, Sisters of the Cross and Passion, etc.

Concerning the Office two questions may be asked—

1. What is the obligation of reciting the Office?

2. What is the manner of reciting it?

1. Speaking of the obligation, it is necessary to distinguish between the Divine Office and the Little Office of the B. Virgin. And, when I speak of the obligation of the Divine Office, I intend what is here said to apply to those Convents only, where the custom of saying the Divine Office exists and where nuns take solemn vows.

To the question whether all professed Religious and nuns are bound to the Office, St. Liguori gives the following general answer:—

“All professed Religious of both sexes and destined or bound to choir are obliged to the Canonical Hours; and, that by reason of

the old and received custom, as well as by their Rules and Constitution." The Abbess or Superioress is bound under sin to have the Office recited or chanted in choir, because, when an obligation falls on the mystical body of a Community, it belongs to the head of such a body to see that it is satisfied. The nuns collectively taken are also bound, as the obligation falls on the Community which they represent. Taken individually they are not bound to choir except by Rule. If the custom is not established of saying the Office in any Religious Institute then the obligation does not exist.

This doctrine has reference to the choir Office, but there is a further question as to whether nuns are bound to the private daily recital of the Office when they are prevented from being present at the choir Office? Although some doctors hold that they are not bound under mortal sin; because they are not obliged to the Canonical Hours by vow or by virtue of their Profession or by any ecclesiastical precept, but only by custom; and it would seem doubtful, according to these doctors, whether the custom holds good in regard to the obligation of saying the Office privately, as it was not introduced with the intention of binding under pain of sin, but might be introduced through error, or devotion, or according to the prescription of the Rule; and under such doubtful circumstances the individuals are in possession of their liberty as the obligation is not established. Besides, some authors say, that as nuns cannot make laws by reason of want of legislative power in women, so they cannot introduce a custom having the force of law. Notwithstanding these reasons, it is more commonly held with St. Liguori that they are bound to the Office, and they would therefore sin by omitting it. For even though the custom were introduced without the intention of obliging, its observance would nevertheless declare and decree the obligation. And although women cannot introduce a general custom binding men and women, there is no reason why they could not introduce a custom which would bind themselves, especially when their Ecclesiastical Superiors receive and approve the custom. St. Liguori cites the existence of such a custom as most faithfully observed by nuns, even with inconvenience to themselves, because they and their Superiors regard it as binding in conscience.

This opinion of St. Liguori's is the one to be held in practice, and supposing the custom and obligation to exist, it may be useful to solve some difficulties that are often met with, in the fulfilment of this obligation.

1. What omission in the Office would be sufficient matter for mortal sin?

It is commonly held that the omission of one of the small Hours, such as Prime or Compline, or a part equivalent to a small Hour, would be a mortal sin; the omission of a lesser part would be only venial. This does not imply that the omission of some of the Hours would be many mortal sins; because the whole Office falls under only one precept, and there would be only one sin in the omission of many Hours or of the entire Office.

2. Do they satisfy the obligation of the Office who only attend to their own part, and pay no attention to the other side of the choir?

It is certain that they who are voluntarily distracted, so as not to attend to the Office at all, do not satisfy the obligation, for although present in body they are absent in mind. Nevertheless, a nun fulfils her obligation of saying the Office, who, at the time is occupied in something that is necessary in connection with the Office; such, for example, as finding out the lessons, playing the organ, ringing the bells, etc., because the choir is considered as one body, and therefore what is said by the choir is regarded as said by her who is, of necessity, occupied with some duty in connection with it, and which duty could not or should not be anticipated. Likewise, the obligation is satisfied by a Religious who attends as well as she can, but through the fault of the choir she does not perceive what is being said, either because the Office is recited too quickly, or for some other reason; by saying her own part and assisting in choir she takes part in the common prayer of the Office, and therefore satisfies her obligation. The same may be said of those who are partly deaf, it is not necessary that they should hear the other side. If entirely deaf or blind, so as not to be able to take any part in the Office, they cannot be said to assist in choir. Nuns need not say in an undertone what is sung at the organ or harmonium. If a nun comes late into the choir she can begin the chant with the choir, and say what she has omitted afterwards; but if only a little portion is omitted it need not be attended to, for the reason that the others supply for the defect on account of the bond of society uniting them all in one body.

3. Is a Religious who forgets whether she has omitted a Psalm or an Hour bound to recite it?

She is not, provided she does not remember that she has not said it, and that she can form a just conjecture that she has said it, as for example, if she knows that she does not ordinarily omit such an Hour. She can also proceed when she remembers beginning a Psalm or Hour and then thinks no more about it.



until she finds herself at the end of it, either reading it from a book or saying it from memory. In such cases she is not only not bound to repeat her Office, but she should not do so, as this would only expose her to the danger of scruples and anxieties.\*

4. What are the reasons which exempt a Religious from the obligation of saying the Office?

They are, 1st. *impossibility*; 2nd. *charity*; 3rd. *dispensation*.

*Impossibility*, that is, a serious physical or moral difficulty; thus, they are exempt (1) who have no Breviary; (2) who are sick and too weak to say Office; (3) who are so blind as not to be able to read.

*Charity* towards one's neighbour, that is, some occupation which cannot be omitted without some notable injury to another; thus the Infirmarian who cannot leave the sick is excused from the Office.

*Dispensation*, that is a dispensation granted by a lawful Superior and for a just cause. The Pope can validly dispense without a cause, and the whole Community or Order; but the Bishop or Ordinary cannot dispense without a cause, and then only in an individual and particular case. In ordinary cases of sickness or doubt, the Superioress may declare that a nun is not bound to say her Office, and the subject should receive and act according to the declaration of her Superior.

There is a question asked, whether a nun, on account of higher exalted contemplation, can omit her Office?

Many doctors say that she cannot, because obedience is better than sacrifice; also, contemplation is voluntary, and the Office is of precept, therefore the former should be omitted, and the latter fulfilled.\*

Others, however, teach that she cannot, on her own authority, commute the Office into contemplation, even though it be exalted, or omit it on that account, for the reason given above. She can, however, occupy herself in the contemplation of divine things, even though, through it she may be rapt into ecstasy, so as not to be able to say Office afterwards, either because she remains in ecstasy all day, or is so tired and fatigued after it as not to be able to read her Office. In this case the Office is not commuted into contemplation, and its omission is not culpable, for the simple reason that she is not able to say it.

As to the obligation of reciting the Little Office of the Blessed Virgin in Communities not bound to Choir and where the nuns

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\* Ita Suarez.

take only simple vows, it is commonly held, that this obligation does not bind under mortal sin, nor even of itself under venial sin, but the obligation is by virtue of the Rule. The following question was proposed to the S. Congregation of Bishops and Regulars: "Whether nuns in general are strictly obliged (*sub gravi*) under grave sin by virtue of their profession to the recitation of the Divine Office proper to their Institute?"

The answer was given on the 19th April, 1844. "Yes, as regards nuns professed with solemn vows, according to the Rule approved by the Apostolic See in which this obligation is imposed. If this obligation is not imposed by Rule, approved authors are to be consulted as to the obligation which is introduced by custom. But where simple vows only are taken they are not bound." This decision does not require any explanation, as it is clear from it, that nuns with simple vows are not strictly bound to the Office prescribed. The saying of the Little Office or the Office prescribed, is however, an important point of the observance over which Superiors are bound to watch, that no abuse may be introduced through the neglect or omission of the Office.

2. *The manner of reciting the Office.*

In order to say the Office properly both *intention* and *attention* are required.

Concerning the *intention*, it is certain that an actual explicit intention of saying the Office is not required, but that the virtual and implicit intention suffices, such an intention, for example, as is included in the fact of taking up the Breviary and beginning in the usual manner. It is not necessary to renew the intention before each Hour, or after the Office is interrupted and resumed. In the act of saying the Office, there seems, always to be included the intention of fulfilling this obligation, and even if one had not the intention of satisfying the obligation, it would nevertheless be satisfied by the fact of saying the Office.

This intention is the wish or rather will of praying or honouring God. For the recitation of the Office as ordered by the Church is an act of religion and of divine worship or praise, and as the saying of the Hours is of itself indifferent; one might read them for the sake of employing one's time; or for the sake of knowledge; or through curiosity, it should be determined to be an act of religion by the person who recites them; hence the necessity of the intention, but it need not be actual and explicit as I have said, such as saying, "I intend to pray," "I intend to honour God," but the virtual suffices, such as one has when she goes to the choir and takes up her book in order to say the Office.

The Office should also be said with attention and devotion. (*Attente and devote.*) Attention is two-fold, *external* and *internal*. The 1st consists in the becoming attitude or position of the body, and being free from all external occupations incompatible with the recital of the Office, even though the mind be wandering. The *internal* is an act of the intellect by which one adverts to what she is doing; and in regard to the Office this is threefold.

1. *Spiritual*, which is to God as to the end and object of prayer.
2. *Literal*, which is to the sense of the words or their signification.
3. *material*, which is merely to the words themselves, namely, to say or pronounce them properly.

It is certain that the *external* attention is required, for without it the Office cannot be said; hence, talking, painting, writing etc., are actions incompatible with due attention; but not so walking looking at scenery, etc., or if others are talking or singing at the time, provided the mind is not seriously distracted by these, or its application prevented. Any of the *internal* attentions suffice, and of course the spiritual is the best. The question is further asked: Besides the *external* attention, is it required to have also the *internal* at least the *literal* or *material* attention? This question is very much controverted, and it would seem that the *external* attention alone suffices, since it is not certain that any precept exists as to the *internal* attention. St. Alphonsus however, thinks that the opinion which requires the *internal* attention is the more probable and the safer to be followed, but the other opinion, he says, is probable and it may be well to use it sometimes in the case of the scrupulous, who may be too anxious about distractions in saying the Office. Although one who is voluntarily distracted may not be obliged to repeat the Office, she would not be exempt from the fault of being voluntarily distracted at her prayers which amounts to a venial sin.

In connection with this subject, there are a few other questions to be asked:—

1. What Office, in the cases of the Canonical Hours, should be said?

It should be the Office of the day, and according to the Breviary and Calendar that is in use by the Order or Convent.

As the Mass and Office should agree, the chaplain who celebrates the Conventual Mass can celebrate the Mass of the Saint of the Order, and also say the Office in accordance with the Mass which he celebrates.

If one Office should happen to be said for another what is to be done? This might happen either on purpose or through

mistake. If on purpose, and the Offices are of equal length or nearly so, the obligation would be satisfied, but this alteration would be a venial sin if done without any cause. If the Office that is substituted is very much shorter than the proper one, such as on Palm Sunday, to say the Office of Easter or Pentecost the obligation would not be satisfied.

If one Office is said for another through mistake, then the rule, *Officium stat pro officio* ("one Office stands for another"), can be followed. But if the Office which one recites is somewhat shorter, such as the Office of a Saint compared with the Sunday's Office, then the defect should be supplied by saying an equivalent from the proper Office. When a mistake of this kind happens, the omitted Office cannot be said on another day in the place of the proper Office, but each Office should be said on its own day, even though through mistake one may have recited it on a previous day.

2. At what time should the Office be recited?

To avoid mortal sin, it suffices to say the whole Office within the twenty-four hours, that is, between mid-night and mid-night.

By privilege Matins and Lauds may be said the evening before, any time after the sun is half-way between noon and sunset, or, practically speaking, any time after two o'clock p.m. To say Vespers and Compline before noon, or to postpone Matins and Lauds of that day to the afternoon, without reason or cause, would according to the more common opinion, be a venial sin. Any reasonable cause would be sufficient to excuse from sin, such as going a journey, greater devotion or tranquility, study, etc., or the danger of being occupied when the time for Office comes.

St. Antoninus says: It is better to anticipate than postpone, as the former is an act of providence, the latter an act of sloth.

3. In what order should the Office be said?

In the order in which it is found in the Breviary, so that the Hours be not inverted; that is, let Prime be said before Tierce and Tierce before Sext, etc. To invert the order is not more than a light fault, and no fault whatever, if there be any cause for it, as for example, to say Office with a companion; not having a Breviary but only a *Horæ Diurnæ* at hand; coming late to the Choir after the Office has commenced, etc.

The Office should not be interrupted without cause, except on the conclusion of an Hour. Matins and Lauds can always be separated; also the three Nocturns of Matins, according to St. Thomas, can be separated for the space of three hours, and with a cause, for a longer time.

If a Psalm or Hour be interrupted, even without cause, one need never repeat what has been said; for the obligation had been already satisfied as to that part of the Office. Besides, each psalm, each verse, and lesson and prayer has its own complete signification.

4. What are the remedies against distractions in saying Office?

Some are negative and some positive. The negative remedies consist in removing the causes of distraction; for example, to keep the eyes mortified, to retire from where there is noise and talking, not to be in a hurry, etc. The positive remedies are: 1. At the beginning of the Office to form the intention of praising and honouring God; 2. to renew that intention in the end of the Psalms at the *Gloria Patri*; 3. to recall to mind often the presence of God; 4. to think on the Passion of our Saviour, distributing the various circumstances of the Passion according to the Hours of the Office.\*

St. Leonard, of Port Maurice, in his *Manuale Sacro*, gives instructions to nuns on the manner of assisting in Choir, and I extract from his work the following:—

"1. The choir is a beautiful theatre, as it were, in which Religious can find their delight and amusement. St. Mary Magdalen de Pazzi, when she heard the bell calling to the Office, was always moved to holy joy, and left at once every other occupation in order to hasten to the choir. St. Catherine of Bologna often said that she desired nothing else but to die chanting the Psalms in the choir, and yet some Religious would be afraid to die at such a time."

The example is given of two who were once saying their Office hurriedly together when suddenly a thunderstorm came on, and so terrified them that one of them exclaimed to his companion, "Let us close our books and say some prayers."

St. Leonard goes on with his instructions: "1. On entering the choir take the holy water, and in signing yourself with it let there be an interior act of contrition for your sins. This obtains the forgiveness of venial sins and purifies the soul.

2. The adoration before the B. Sacrament should be made with a lively faith and great reverence in union with the adoration of the angels and saints, saying in the interior of the soul: "*Adoramus te Christe and benedicimus tibi quia per Sanctam Crucem tuam redemisti mundum.*" Then take your place in choir with recollection as if assisting before the throne of the

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\*Gury. Tract. de Statibus Particularibus, No. 91.

adorable Trinity. Let your thoughts and affections during that time be fixed upon God, and desire that every word you utter may be an act of love. Know that whilst Religious recite the Office in choir the angels assist and offer their prayers to God. The Blessed Ermano, whilst assisting in choir during matins, saw many angels with golden thuribles incensing those who were recollected, and passing over those who were careless and distracted.

3. The *Aperi Domine* being said, commence the *Deus in Adjutorium* with a fervent wish for God's assistance during the time of prayer.

4. To assist the soul in attending to God during the saying of the Office, and to prevent distractions you may use the following arrangement of Hours according to the events of our Saviour's Passion.

1st Nocturn . . .	Washing of His disciples' feet.
2nd Nocturn . . .	Institution of the B. Sacrament.
3rd Nocturn . . .	The prayer in the Garden.
Te Deum . . .	Praise to the B. Trinity.
1st Psalm of Lauds	In the garden: <i>Ego Sum.</i> His enemies fall.
2nd " " . . .	Jesus taken and bound.
3rd " " . . .	Brought before the tribunals.
4th " " . . .	Jesus before Pilate, His silence.
Psalm Laudate . .	Jesus imprisoned and that night in the hands of the soldiers.
The Benedictus . .	Again praise and bless God with all His creatures.
Prime . . . . .	The Scourging at the Pillar.
Tierce . . . . .	The Crowning with Thorns.
Sext . . . . .	The carrying of the Cross.
None . . . . .	The three hours' agony.
Vespers . . . . .	Jesus dead.
Compline . . . . .	The taking down from the Cross and burial.

At the *Gloria Patri* make an act of lively faith like St. Mary Magdalen of Pazzi, who was so moved at this part, as to grow pale and death-like, bending her head as if to the block, to suffer martyrdom for the faith.

St. Leonard knew a Religious who practised this method of saying the Office and thereby was soon free from all distractions and acquired in a short time such great perfection, as to enjoy even here a special foretaste of Paradise.

It is related of two Religious, one a Superior, the other a Subject who were condemned to the most bitter pains of Pur-

gatory, for no other reason than their little application to the Divine Office.

St. Antony, Archbishop of Firenze, relates a vision of a holy man, who saw a demon in the choir putting many things into a sack, being asked what they were he said, that into that sack he put all syllables and words which the Religious omitted, or uttered halfway between their teeth, or commenced before the other side had finished; and also their distractions and careless thoughts.

5. In order then to repair the defects committed during the time of office say the *Sacrosanctæ* with humility, and ask pardon of God for all your faults. To the recital of this prayer after Office, Pope Leo X. granted a full remission of all the defects which, through human frailty, might be committed during the Divine Office."

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## CHAPTER II.

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### MENTAL PRAYER OR MEDITATION.\*

After treating of the Divine Office as the principal form of vocal prayer used by Religious, I wish to give some practical instruction on the manner of making Mental Prayer.

Prayer, as described by the Saints and the Masters of the Spiritual Life, is the elevation of the mind and heart to God. Since this may be either externally in words, or internally in the mind, prayer is divided into *Vocal* and *Mental*.

Vocal Prayer is that which we express by words, as, for example, the Divine Office, the Psalms, Lord's Prayer, etc.

Mental Prayer, or Meditation, is that which is made in the mind and heart. It is of this prayer we here speak, and set forth the method and rules for making it well.

In this prayer there are three parts:—1. The Preparation.  
2. The Meditation or Consideration. 3. The Conclusion or Thanksgiving; and of these we shall now treat separately.

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\* These Instructions were translated from an Italian MS. some few years ago, with some modifications; and as they contain all that I deem necessary to be said on the subject, I reprint them in this place.

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PART I.

THE PREPARATION.

After invoking the Holy Ghost by reciting the Antiphon *Veni Sancti Spiritus*, etc.:—"Come Holy Ghost! fill the hearts of Thy faithful, and enkindle in them the fire of Thy Divine Love" you will make devoutly the five acts which constitute the immediate Preparation. It is not intended that you should know them by heart and recite them word for word, but in making them you may use the thoughts and words that are suggested by your own devotion.

I. AN ACT OF FAITH OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD.

I present myself, O my God, before Thy Divine Presence; and although I know that Thou art present in every place, I know that Thou art present in a particular and special manner with those who pray. I believe, therefore, that I am in Thy Divine Presence with greater certainty than if I beheld Thee with my eyes.

2. AN ACT OF ADORATION.

I adore Thee, O my God, and humble myself in the abyss of my own nothingness, and in the deeper abyss of my sins. I know, my God, how cold my adoration is, and therefore I invite the Angels and Saints of Heaven to adore Thee, together with me, and for me, uniting also this my adoration with that of the ever Blessed Virgin and the Sacred Humanity of my Divine Redeemer.

3. AN ACT OF HUMILITY.

I am unworthy, O Great God, to appear in Thy presence, on account of my sins and my many imperfections. I am the vilest of creatures; of myself I am nothing but sin and misery. How great is Thy goodness, O God, to have spared me and to permit me now to converse with Thee! Wherefore, penetrated with the knowledge of my great unworthiness, I fall down in the most profound humility before Thee and adore Thee.

4. AN ACT OF SORROW.

O my God, how much it displeases me to have offended Thee; because Thou art infinitely good, infinitely amiable, I love Thee with my whole heart and above all things, and therefore I am exceedingly grieved for having offended Thee. Now I know the



evil I have done in despising Thee, my God, so good, so amiable, and so loving, who art my Creator, my Redeemer, and my most loving Father, I resolve to die rather than offend Thee again.

## 5. AN ACT OF PETITION.

Since Thou has condescended, O my God, to call me to make this holy meditation, I beseech Thee to grant me grace to make it with the most devout attention, enlighten my understanding, and enkindle in my heart holy affections, that I may receive through it the fruit which Thou desirest. O most Holy Mary Mistress of Prayer, help me, my Angel Guardian and ye Saints of Paradise, assist me and intercede for me.

*Sancti Angeli et omnes sancti intercedite pro nobis ad Dominum ut nos mereamur ab eo adjuvari et salvari. Qui vivis et regnas, etc.*

REMARKS.—1. There is no special time allotted for the preparation, so that one may spend more or less time in it, according to her devotion. If God should communicate some special light to the soul during any of the preparatory acts, she may rest in that act, and even though the whole hour of prayer be so occupied, it will be well spent.

2. Should the soul not experience any such extraordinary devotion and the Meditation be for an hour, the first ten minutes or quarter of the hour will suffice for the preparation. If the Meditation be for half an hour, the preparation should be proportionately short.

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## PART II.

### MEDITATION.

Next comes the Meditation, which is the principal part of Mental Prayer. Meditation, as we here take it, is the exercise of the three powers of the soul, namely, the memory, the intellect and the will on some mystery of our faith, in order to impress it more deeply on our minds, to excite in our hearts pious affections towards God, and to draw from it practical conclusions for the regulation of our lives. The exercise of the memory is the representation of the mystery to the intellect. The exercise of the intellect is the consideration of the points quietly and carefully, discoursing upon them with judgment and applying them to yourself.

The will is exercised by the holy affections elicited, and the good resolutions made conformable to the subject matter of the Meditation.

According to this order you will find Meditation a very simple and natural work. You have never performed a fully deliberate act in your life without going through the process more or less completely. Even to commit sin one often goes through all the parts enumerated. Take the case of a vindictive man. Let us suppose that he has been insulted and struck in the face by another in a public assembly, but by the interference of his friends he has been prevented from punishing his assailant on the spot. He retires to his own house and shuts himself up in his room. Observe now how he goes about his meditation. His imagination and memory retain a lively picture of all that has taken place. He seems to hear the words that were spoken, to feel the smart of the blow, he sees the room, the bystanders, his assailant, etc. Now the intellect occupies itself in considering the outrage in all its aspects: I, a gentleman, have received a blow on the face; the greatest indignity that a man of honour could receive. And from whom? From a man who should have respected me . . . who is under many obligations to me . . . And why? For no reason whatever . . . no provocation given . . . And where? At a public assembly, in the presence of friends, before whom I have been thus insulted and humiliated. These reflections excite the heart to violent emotions of anger, hatred and vengeance. At length these desires assume a practical shape. He determines on the particular form of revenge he will take; the manner of carrying it into effect, the time and place, etc., and the persons on whom he may depend for assistance, etc. This unhappy man has made his meditation, but to the perdition of his own soul. "*He hath devised iniquity on his bed.*" (Ps. xxv. 5.)

Let us make in the self-same manner our meditations on the truths of holy faith for the salvation of our souls, exercising as above the *memory* in representing the points of meditation, the *intellect* in considering them, and reasoning upon them, and afterwards applying them to ourselves. Then the *will* exercises itself with such affections as hatred and sorrow for sin, confusion on account of our misery, hope and love towards God, thanksgivings and offerings, holy desires of virtue, of paradise, etc., holy resolutions, petitions to God, to the Blessed Virgin and to the Saints, etc. Of course these affections should be always in conformity with the matter under consideration.

Behold all this reduced to practice. Let my meditation be for example, on the End of Man. Having prepared myself by making the five acts mentioned in the first part, my *memory* presently dwells upon the first point which is; *that the only end of man upon earth is to serve God.* My *intellect* now dwells upon this truth, and examines it slowly and with care. I have been created by God, and placed by Him in this world, not for the acquirement of riches, not to spend life pleasantly and waste valuable time, but solely to serve my God; this is my chief and paramount duty; this is my sole and most important employment; to it, therefore, I am bound to direct all my thoughts and actions, all other cares and duties must be subservient to this great primary end. Have I acted thus in the past? No, cry out those moments of my past life, squandered in deplorable idleness; no, in my conscience do I hear the answer from so many works performed by me not for God, but for vanity. No, exclaim loudly the number of sins of my past life by which I have disobeyed God instead of serving Him! (Here follow the affections of the will.) My God I am confounded at the sight of my blind depravity; I am heartily sorry for having disobeyed Thee, I ask Thy pardon. I thank Thee for having borne with me so long and so patiently, and I resolve in future to amend my life. Henceforth I shall carefully fly idleness. I shall have a pure intention of pleasing Thee alone in all my actions; in my reading and studies, eating, drinking, sleeping, etc. With the assistance of Thy grace I resolve to abandon this or that sin; to avoid this or that particular occasion; to perform this or that good work, etc.

For the better understanding of what has been said, take one more example.

Let my meditation be upon the Most Holy Passion of my Saviour—the Crucifixion.

By means of holy faith my memory leads me to Calvary, and puts before me that event in all its fearful reality; from this vivid representation the intellect ponders on each single detail, the agony, the burning shame, the torments of our afflicted Saviour, contemplating the immense evil of sin, the immense love of God towards men, the virtues which our Divine Master teaches us to practice, and other pious reflections of this kind. Nor must I rest here, but go on to produce affections of the will which is to be the principal fruit of my meditation. 1. *Compassion* towards Jesus; considering Him exposed to so many injuries and insults, His delicate frame mangled and torn by unutterable torments. 2. *Gratitude*; thanking Him for the great benefits He has con-

ferred on me in suffering for me, and thus freeing me from hell. 3. *Contrition*; beholding Him enduring all these pains and torments on account of my sins. 4. *Love*; what can more strongly induce me to love Him tenderly than the consideration of the excess of that Divine Charity which caused Him to suffer and die on a Cross for me. 5. *Confidence and trust in God*; for if He did so much for man when he was His enemy, what will He not do for Him when he becomes His friend? From these affections there should flow good resolutions, *ex. gr.*: at the sight of so many virtues displayed in our Lord's Passion, I must propose to imitate Him. I see Him obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross; henceforth I will practice obedience. Seeing that he died ignominiously between two robbers, henceforth I will cultivate the virtue of humility; Jesus prayed for his murderers, I will be more charitable to my companions, etc. *Patience* in not vindicating Himself; *meekness* in not complaining; *poverty* and all other virtues displayed by Him in so admirable a manner during the course of His Passion.

In order to move these affections of the will, the following considerations may be of great assistance to the soul.

1. Who suffers these things? Who gives me an example?
2. What does He suffer? How great His sufferings?
3. For whom and at whose hands does he suffer?
4. How does He suffer? with humility, patience and in silence.
5. Why did He suffer all these things?

I would also suggest that during our meditations on the Passion, we endeavour to keep the following thoughts before the mind:

1. That Christ suffered for each one as well as for all men; that is, for each of us individually, as well as for the whole human race.
2. That Christ suffered not only for us but by us; that is, that we took part in His Passion, and caused His sufferings by our sins.
3. If in the chapel or choir where the B. Sacrament is kept, we should remember that the same Christ who suffered for us in Jerusalem and died for us on Calvary, is *really* and *truly* present in the Holy Eucharist.

Our most Holy Mother Mary desires earnestly our sympathy in her many and heartrending sorrows, wherefore in meditating on the Passion of Jesus we must not forget the Dolours of His Immaculate Mother, who stood faithfully by His Cross on Calvary.

REMARKS.—1. We may observe that to picture to our imagination the mystery on which we wish to meditate is of extreme

importance, and will greatly assist us ; for example, in meditating on the Scourging we can bring before us a lively representation of our Lord as He stands bound to the pillar with blood flowing from His open wounds. Care must be taken, however, not to let the imagination dwell too minutely on the mystery as painters are accustomed to do in drawing a picture ; since this wearies the mind and is subject to illusion. It will be sufficient to bring before the mind the various events as they occurred in the most natural and easy manner without forcing the imagination, by the simple remembrance of the mystery that has taken place. This will be found very easy for those who are accustomed to prayer.

"To make prayer well," says St. Peter of Alcantara, "nothing is required but the simple heart of a virtuous old woman."

2. The reflections or considerations of the intellect being merely a means to produce holy affections, their exercise should cease when this end is obtained. Medicines are thrown aside when health is restored ; or, as the smith, that he may give his metal the due form and shape, puts it frequently in the fire ; so in order to move the will to holy feelings and good resolutions we must apply the intellect again and again to holy thoughts and considerations. St. Francis of Sales justly observes that we must act with the intellect in prayer, as the bee does with flowers ; it remains on them so long as it finds honey to extract. Finally, when the heart is moved to any particular affection you should dwell upon it as long as possible leaving off the discourse of the understanding. After the example of one who sets about digging for a spring, who when he finds it stops, drinks and quenches his thirst to his satisfaction without further labour. When the affections cease it is necessary to return again to the consideration.

3. It is not necessary to produce all the affections above named ; but only those to which the soul feels most strongly moved, and, even if the whole time of prayer be thus spent the meditation will be profitably made.

4. As the resolutions proceed from the affections, it is well to note that they should not be too many, but few and substantial ; neither should they be abstract and too general, but practical and particular. Such vague and general resolutions as these " I will not give way to anger ;" " I resolve never more to resent injuries ;" " for the future I will avoid all evil company," etc., are generally useless and might as well not be made. Each one must descend to those particular cases which her duties and state of life demand, and foresee the particular occasions during the day wherein she may displease God and resolve to avoid them.

5. It will sometimes happen that the soul is in a state of aridity and desolation, so that it cannot produce acts of the will. At such times you must be careful not to abandon prayer, for in this way the devil deceives many, leading them to abandon prayer little by little, so that at length he may cast them into the abyss of tepidity and sin. The soul, under such circumstances, must patiently wait for God's assistance and strive quietly to remember the presence of God; and although the heart be cold and without sensible devotion, endeavour to form acts of sorrow for sin; of thanksgiving for the divine mercies; of love for God; and be well assured this desolation and aridity are more meritorious than sweetness and consolation; for "one ounce of suffering is of more value," says the Blessed Vittoria, "than a million pounds of sweetness in prayer." Above all, let the soul be occupied in the knowledge of itself until it practically realises that of itself it can do no good, not even have a good thought. It is of greater advantage to the soul, says St. Teresa, to pass one day in the humble knowledge of oneself, although it costs much pain and fatigue, than to spend many days in contemplation.

If the soul succeed not in doing what has been said, let it keep company with Jesus abandoned and agonising in the garden and say to him with a grateful heart; *non mea se tua voluntas fiat. Pater mi non quod ego volo sed quod tu.* It is well also under such circumstances to do what St. Teresa counsels, to pray for the poor, the afflicted, the imprisoned, and the dying, and in this manner the soul by little and little will become more alive to devotion.

But if the soul cannot succeed even in doing this, it should remain as a statue in the sight of God, and say, "O Lord, I stand here as a guard or sentinel before Thee; for Thy love I guard these benches; do Thou remember that even the little dogs eat the crumbs of bread that fall from their master's table." "I am a poor miserable creature." "So many of Thy servants eat at this hour from Thy table." "Deign, therefore, to throw also to me some crumbs." With this holy humility, confidence, and resignation, persevere in your prayer, offering up to God those good affections and thoughts which you formerly had, as also the fervent acts of charity and love which are made by all enamoured souls who are at that hour engaged in prayer; thus the same aridity from which the soul suffers will be turned into a useful and fruitful prayer.

Let us repeat, that the soul must, on no account, leave off prayer; for in the same manner as the body without food becomes

feeble and prostrate, and at length dies; so the soul without its spiritual nourishment becomes feeble, then cold, and tepid, and finally dies to God's grace.

Let the soul, therefore, consider that its eternal salvation may depend on an hour's or half-hour's Mental Prayer, as happened in the case of St. John Gualbert and St. Anthony Abbot, and many others. The spirit of the Lord is compared to a wind that bloweth where it listeth. On the other hand, from the neglect of that prayer may follow the loss of the soul, it being deprived of those graces which God had prepared for its salvation during the time of prayer.

When the soul is molested by distractions and importunate thoughts, let it not be disturbed or lose courage, but in peace and repose of spirit cast them aside as persons are wont to brush off flies from their face. If they return again with renewed vigour, let the soul preserve its patience. Abraham spent a whole day in keeping off the birds from the victim prepared for sacrifice, till at length God sent fire from heaven which consumed the victim; and for this, God being pleased, entered into friendship and alliance with his holy servant. If the soul acts in this manner, and remains faithful in banishing the distracting thoughts, these will be consumed in the fire of Divine Love, and the soul will be dearer to God; furthermore, have recourse to God, make known to Him your misery, and ask His assistance; say with the blind man in the Gospel: *Jesu fili David miserere mei; or Domine ut videam.* Or you may slowly repeat some vocal prayer as the Pater Noster—some psalm or canticle as the *Benedicite* or the *Miserere*; or some ejaculatory prayer as: *fiat voluntas tua.* The time will thus be better spent than by remaining idle and inactive.

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## PART III.

### THANKSGIVING.

1. Offer up to God the resolutions you have made in order that He may grant you the grace to enable you to keep them. Have great diffidence in yourself, being persuaded the devil will tempt you to forego or break the good resolutions which you have made; wherefore ask God's help, saying with St. Philip Neri—"Lord do not trust me to myself." Give thanks to God for the benefits received, general as well as particular; for the lights received in prayer; for the good purposes made, and the holy sentiments you have had in the meditation.

2. Pray to God to grant you those graces which are necessary for your eternal salvation, such as humility, patience, and perseverance in good. You should continually pray to God for the grace of perseverance, since it is not those who begin well, but who end well, that are saved; *qui perseveraverit usque ad finem hic salvus erit.*

3. Pray then also for parents, friends, neighbours, benefactors, and enemies; for the pious, for sinners, heretics, infidels; for the Holy Church, the Pope; Cardinals, Bishops, Christian Princes, &c. Afterwards say a Pater and Ave, and conclude your prayer by the *Agimus Tibi gratias*, etc.

REMARKS.—I. After meditation examine how you have spent the time of prayer. Ask pardon of God for whatever faults you may have committed during it, and resolve with His divine assistance to be more faithful at your next meditation.

It is well to take from the meditation some pious ejaculation to make use of during the day; and, let the soul be persuaded that if it wish to find recollection in a future meditation, it should keep up during the day the heat and fervour of the past meditation, as the baker keeps the door of the oven closed after the bread is taken out until it be replenished, in order that he may the more easily heat it again.

2. If on account of special difficulties, you cannot succeed according to the above method of meditation, you should not on this account neglect Mental Prayer; but endeavour to follow some other method, and failing in this also, help yourself by the use of a book, intermingling reading with meditation after the example of St. Teresa. But the present method should be used both by beginners and by those who are advanced, so as to avoid the fault of tempting God by remaining idle, and wasting the precious time of prayer. Furthermore, whoever wishes to progress in Mental Prayer should be careful to manifest to her Confessor or Director her difficulties in prayer, as well as the lights she receives from God, so that she may not be deceived. Let all remember, however, the saying of St. Philip Neri, that “he who pretends to make Mental Prayer without mortification resembles one who tries to fly without wings.” The practice is recommended by some of noting in a small book the lights received in each meditation and the resolutions made, and to read them over once a month; for the good sentiments formed in meditation, by being read again, make a fresh good impression upon us, and by reading the promises made to God, a fresh purpose will be made to observe them, whilst the heart will be



filled with contrition and humility for past infidelity in their observance.

If you are faithful in following the directions and rules here given, the Holy Ghost himself, the Sovereign master, will teach you many things you could never learn from human teaching or by your own study. He will lead you by the light of truth in the way of virtue to the happy consummation of your desires in eternal life.

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### CHAPTER III.

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#### ON THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

As nuns very often experience great difficulties in regard to the reception of this Sacrament, and have often great fears as to the dispositions necessary for its reception, I wish to make some observations on this subject that may assist them in forming their conscience and in solving their difficulties.

How often are nuns obliged to go to confession?

Many authors think that they are obliged to go every month, but others, and the greater number, deny this obligation. The monthly confession and communion are enjoined on Regulars by the Council of Trent\* as a matter of counsel, and not of precept. Religious are exhorted by the Council of Trent to receive these Sacraments, that is, Penance and the Holy Eucharist, at least every month. And Clement V. in his Constitution "*Ne in agro stat*" seems to impose it as an obligation on Religious, but his precept is thought to refer to monks and not to nuns, because what is obligatory is to be restricted. Many authors, however, hold that it applies also to nuns, because the end of the precept is the same for both; and hence Cajetan and some others extend the obligation of monthly confession to both monks and nuns. It cannot be denied that by long abstention from the Sacraments great scandal might arise, as also great laxity of religious discipline and regular observance; and therefore great detriment to a Religious Community. For this reason alone, without any precept, a Religious openly and notably negligent in approaching the Sacraments might be guilty of grave sin.

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\* Sess. 25 de Regul. c. 10.

In almost all Religious Congregations there is the custom, according to Rule, of going every week to confession, so that in them the recommendation of the Council of Trent is more than satisfied. All should endeavour to observe this practice, that they may preserve that special purity of soul and fervour of spirit that should adorn the spouses of Jesus Christ.

St. Charles Borromæus gives the following rule to his priests, which may also apply to Religious :—"Let them confess every week, and even oftener, and always when one may be conscious of having committed any serious fault."\*

St. Charles himself went to confession every day, that he might the better prepare himself for Holy Mass. By the statutes of many Councils priests are exhorted to confess regularly every eight days, and never to defer their confession beyond a fortnight, that their souls may be the more purified to deal with divine things, such as the Sacraments and the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. And as all Religious are brought constantly into immediate contact with divine things, they, like priests, should go to confession regularly every eight or ten days.

There is also another reason why Religious should be exact in receiving the Sacraments every week, namely, that they may gain the indulgences of the Church.

In order to gain a plenary indulgence confession and communion are ordinarily required. By a decree of the S. Congregation of Indulgences of the 19th May, 1759, it was decided that to gain a plenary indulgence for which Sacramental Confession is prescribed as one of the conditions, even those who are not conscious of any grievous sin should comply with it. And in a decree of the year 1763 the same Congregation declared in favour of the faithful who are accustomed to go regularly every week to confession, that the weekly confession is sufficient for all the indulgences to be gained during the week—*servatis aliis servandis*. By a response of the S. Congregation of Indulgences of the 12th March, 1855, this concession made to the faithful is declared to embrace all and each indulgence, even that of the *Portiuncula*, and that the words "once a week" means every seven days; so that, for example, those who confess from week to week every Thursday, or every Saturday, or any other day, as the case may be, certainly fulfil the prescript of confession as required for gaining a plenary indulgence.†

\* Conc. IV. Mediol. p. 3.

† S. Cong. Indul., 23 Nov., 1878 and 25 Feb., 1886.

In places where there is a scarcity of Confessors the Holy See is accustomed to grant the same privilege when requested by the Ordinaries of the Dioceses, that the faithful may gain the indulgences by going to confession every fortnight, that is, every fourteen days, *infra duas hebdomadas*. In these cases the confession should be within the fortnight.\*

The time of the weekly confession should therefore be accurately observed, as it would be a great loss both to our own souls and to the suffering souls in purgatory, to defer it, inasmuch as, we should then lose the plenary indulgences, many of which are applicable to the suffering souls in purgatory.

How many kinds of confessions are nuns accustomed to make from time to time?

Our confessions may be either *general* or *particular*. By the particular confession, I mean that which is made every week or since the last confession. In it all the grievous sins committed since our last confession should be told, as also, any sin which we may have forgotten in our past confessions. It is recommended that we make this confession at the appointed time, and on each occasion, to endeavour to make it as if it were to be our last confession, and as if we knew that we were to die that day. If this is done each time, we may expect that there will not be much to trouble us at the hour of death.

General confessions may be either of the whole life; or of a portion of the life, that is, either a confession for the last year or two or three years as the case may be, or from retreat to retreat.

In regard to a *general confession* of the whole life, for the direction of those who may be anxious about the past, it may be well to state the doctrine concerning *general* confessions. A general confession may be either *necessary*, *useful* or *injurious*.

It is *necessary* when past confessions have been bad, or invalid, which may happen, either by defect of integrity, or of sorrow, or of resolution or through some other cause.

Sins once properly confessed and absolved from, need never, not even at death be confessed again. And as long as confessions are made with the proper dispositions, no general confession is necessary. It is, however, necessary for all who have made bad confessions, and then, only from the time in which the confessions have been bad and it need not include the whole life, unless all past confessions have been invalid.

A general confession is *useful*, and may be recommended in

three cases : 1st. For those who are grown up and have not required, a general confession, in order to rectify the mistakes of holy actions of their earlier confessions. 2nd. Those who are about to change their state of life, as for example, Priests at their ordination, Religious either at their reception or at profession. 3rd. For greater security at the hour of death, that is, if time and opportunity permit. It may also be useful at other times for our own self-knowledge and humiliation, at the reconsideration of how in our past lives we have offended God.

A general confession would be *injurious* to the scrupulous and those of tender consciences. They are not allowed to make general confessions, for the reason, that they would do them more harm than good. They have to obey their confessor blindly and not make general confessions unless he allows them to do so.

Then there are the confessions that are of a portion of our lives ; annual confessions for example, or, since the last retreat, or since profession, etc. These are sometimes called *reviews*. These confessions are very often made by those who are accustomed to make regular retreats, during the time of the spiritual exercises, and they are very useful and profitable.

1. For examining how we have observed our vows and rules.
2. How we have advanced in or fallen away from perfection.
3. For keeping our sins before us that we may be the more humble.
4. For repairing any defect there may have been in our past confessions, for, it sometimes happens that a penitent may think the confession all right and yet the Sacrament may be invalid through defect of contrition or for some such cause.

How are nuns to make their confession ?

In answer to this question it is not necessary to enter into all the conditions of a good confession, but it may be useful to call attention to the three parts of the Sacrament of Penance, namely *Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction*, as some doubts and difficulties are experienced by Religious, as well as by others, in connection with these conditions.

1. *Contrition*.—It is said that many confessions are bad through want of sufficient sorrow or contrition. Everyone knows how necessary this disposition is in order to obtain absolution from our sins. We should remember its necessity and its qualities.

The contrition which we should have has three parts : 1st. *Sorrow* for sin committed, not that sorrow which is to be felt in the sensible part of our nature, but sorrow of will ; 2nd, *detestation*, or a sincere hatred of sin ; 3rd, the *resolution* of not sinning again.

In ~~pl~~attrition, as required for the Sacrament of Penance, ~~is~~ ~~acc~~ these three qualities. The ~~sorrow~~ required in the Sacrament of Penance should be *formal, supernatural, universal and efficacious.*

*Formal*, that is, a positive act by which the will truly and really sorrows for sin and detests it as an offence against God. Hence, an act of the *love* of God, or of *faith*, or of *hope* would not suffice, unless in the act of the love of God we may suppose an act of sorrow for sin to be formally included. Neither is it sufficient to have the resolution alone of not sinning again, as this might be without sorrow for the past. Nor would the sorrow included in the desire of being sorry suffice if actual sorrow were absent, which could scarcely happen.

*Supernatural* both by reason of the principle or source from which it is obtained, namely, through God's grace, and by reason of the motive, which should be supernatural and in some way refer to God. Sorrow, for a natural motive, would not suffice, such as the natural turpitude of sin, or the human shame attached to it, or on account of the natural evils that follow from it. It should be through some supernatural motive, as I have said, that is, either because it is against the law of God, or merits the pains of purgatory or of hell, or because it causes the loss of grace and of glory, or because of the goodness of God. Sorrow through the fear of hell or punishment is called *attrition*, and is sufficient to obtain forgiveness of our sins in the Sacrament of Penance, but not without the Sacrament. Sorrow through the love of God is called *perfect contrition*, and is sufficient to obtain forgiveness by itself when the Sacrament of Penance cannot be received.

*Universal* in respect to all mortal sins; for no mortal sin is remitted unless all be remitted, and no true sorrow can be for one unless it extend to all, as the motive of contrition is the same for all.

Sorrow need not extend to all venial sins, and in the case, that one has only venial sins to confess, the penitent is bound under grave sin to be sorry, at least for one of them, when absolution is to be given; otherwise there would be no matter for the Sacrament.

*Efficacious*.—Not *effective* as they say, that is, that the penitent would never again sin, but *affective*, of such a kind, that it excludes every desire of sin or will of sinning.

The sorrow should also be the greatest of all sorrows, not in feeling or sentiment, but in will and estimation, so that we should be ready to die rather than commit a mortal sin again.

To conceive this sorrow for sin, no length of time is required, but one instant of sorrow suffices, as in the example of holy David; \* touched with sorrow he simply said: *I have sinned against the Lord*; and immediately he is answered by the prophet Nathan: *The Lord hath also taken away thy sin*. It is also in accordance with reason, for as one instant suffices for a just man to become a sinner, so it is sufficient for a sinner to become just. Hence the axiom: "*Homo in momento emendatur a gratia*," "Man is in an instant amended by grace."

After stating the above doctrine, I think it necessary to say that devout souls need not be too nervous or too much afraid about their contrition. It is not difficult for one, who habitually lives in the grace of God to elicit an act of sincere contrition; for, even though it may not be felt, it is none the less real, inasmuch as contrition dwells not in sentiment or feeling but in the will.

There are some, who are not sure about their contrition, because at the time of confession, or when receiving absolution, they experienced no sentiment of sorrow; or, because they forgot to renew the act of contrition at the moment the priest was pronouncing the words of absolution; or, because they were distracted at the time of making the act of contrition. These should be persuaded that hatred and detestation of sin does not cease with the act of contrition; this disposition lasts a long time in the soul unless it is retracted; also when other occupations intervene between the preparation and the confession it is not necessary to be troubled or to imagine that the contrition does not last, but simply to renew the act which one has already made. The will does not change in such a short time, especially when one desires to approach the Sacrament in order to obtain God's grace and the forgiveness of sin. And one need not be disquieted about distractions or forgetfulness at the time of confession. Distraction at the time would be a fault if it were voluntary, but it would not destroy the sorrow for sin which exists in the soul.

**Confession.**—Amongst the properties of a good confession, as enumerated by St. Thomas, there are two principal ones to which we may refer: *fidelity* or *veracity*, and *integrity*. By reason of the first, namely, *fidelity* or *veracity*, we should:—

1. Avoid confessing a sin which we have not committed, or denying one that we have.
2. We are also obliged to confess a habit of sin, if contracted, when asked by the Confessor.

3. In general confessions the mortal sins not confessed should be distinguished from those which we have never confessed. Though some deny that this is necessary, yet the opposite opinion is probable and safer to follow in practice.

4. If a recent sin, that is, one since our last confession, were confessed as a sin of our past life, the Sacrament would be invalid, because, this would deceive the Confessor, and the penitent would be guilty of a double lie, one by saying that the sin was committed, say, for example, a year ago when it was not, and another, by denying the sin was committed in the present week.

5. Careless confessions are against the *fidelity* due to this Sacrament. Saying in the accusation, "I think," or "perhaps," or "as far as God sees me guilty," these and such like expressions should not be used when one is certain of having committed sins. They are used in doubtful cases when the penitent is not certain of having consented to sin, and, therefore, it would be misleading the Confessor to make use of them in cases where one is certain of the sin and of the guilt.

By reason of the *integrity* of the confession one is obliged, in the case of grievous sins, to tell :—

1st. The sin in its kind or species, and not simply in its *genus*, as theologians say. For example, "bad thoughts;" these thoughts may be either against chastity, or faith, or purity, or any other virtue, and there might be danger of mistake in the general accusation of "bad thoughts," although they may be understood to mean sins against purity; but as far as the accusation is concerned it does not specify the sin, but simply declares it as a bad thought. 2. The number of the sins as near as possible. 3. The circumstances that change the species of the sin, such as in a Religious, the circumstance of having taken vows would make their sins against obedience and chastity sacrilegious. 4. Circumstances that would alter the case in such a way that a venial sin would become mortal, and a mortal sin venial, should be mentioned. Not that a venial sin of its own nature can become mortal, but what in a light matter would be venial by reason of grave matter would be mortal; thus, a small lie might wilfully cause great injury; a small amount in theft becomes mortal when it increases to a large sum; a wicked curse might be only venial through imperfect deliberation.

In regard to the *integrity*, the following doubts are sometimes proposed for solution :—

1. Is one obliged to confess a sin which she is not sure of having told in previous confessions?

When the former confessions have been made with care and the doubt has not arisen till a long time after, there is reason to believe that the sin has been already confessed; and, if after having lived a long time in the practice of virtue, some pious souls should be troubled with fears about not having explained some past sins or confessed them sufficiently, the Confessor, says Concina, should forbid them to return to their past confessions.

2. Is one obliged to confess a sin which she is not certain of having committed?

Strictly speaking, she is not according to Suarez and St. Liguori. Nevertheless, if she is troubled about it, it is better to confess it, the soul will be more tranquil after having made the confession, but she should confess the sin as doubtful when she does tell it. At the same time, it may be remembered that souls accustomed to virtue, who do not commit grave sins or only very seldom fall, should regard their doubts as proofs that they have not certainly consented to sin. It is morally impossible, that a soul strong in virtue, should change and become sinful without clearly perceiving and wishing it. Of course it would be different in the case of persons accustomed to sin and to consent to sin, when the probability is all against them, and they may consider themselves guilty.

3. What is the penitent to do, who desires to receive the Sacrament of Penance, and who is not conscious of any wilful sin since the last confession?

She ought to accuse herself of some sin of her past life for which she is truly sorry. It is commonly taught, that sins already forgiven can be confessed again as new matter for the Sacrament of Penance. Pious souls adopt the practice of telling some sin of their past lives, and this practice is a salutary one, when the penitent has no serious sin to confess, in order that the contrition necessary for the Sacrament of Penance may be secured.

In regard to the confession of venial sins the following points may be noted. 1. Venial sins need not necessarily be confessed at all, as they can be forgiven by many other means and there is no precept to confess them. 2. Venial sins are sufficient matter for the Sacrament of Penance because they are sins and Christ said: *Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven.* 3. When the penitent has only venial sins to confess there should be sorrow at least for one of them. 4. The resolution of amendment need not extend to all venial sins but only to one, or it would be sufficient to resolve to diminish their frequency. 5. It is not very profitable, to draw up a long catalogue of all venial sins for confession.



but it is better to accuse oneself specifically of a few of them, for which one has sorrow and purpose of amendment; for, as Thomas-a-Kempis says: "If we should extirpate one vice in every year we would soon be perfect men." Therefore, it is advisable to select for confession, some venial fault which may be more serious than the others and probably the cause of the others, for which one can be specially sorry and purpose to avoid in future.

*Satisfaction.* In regard to the sacramental penance, it cannot be wilfully omitted without sin as it is an *integral* part of the Sacrament of Penance. If the penance is a heavy one and imposed for grave sins, it would be a mortal sin to omit it; if only a light penance, its omission would be only a venial sin.

The penitent cannot change the penance imposed by the Confessor. If the penance is forgotten, the penitent should have recourse to the Confessor, if this can be done conveniently to find out what it is, or that he may impose another; but there is no obligation to repeat the Confession for this purpose, for when the penance is forgotten by the penitent and by the confessor that penance becomes impossible. It is not good to get into the habit of repeating the penance, but it is advisable to get into the habit of saying it immediately or soon after confession if no particular time is prescribed. This would remove the danger of forgetting it.

A penance repeated if given to be said only once, is not sacramental, and therefore only the first time a sacramental penance. Even though you repeat it twenty times afterwards it is no longer penance after the first time. This is a reason why we should be careful to say the penance well, the first time, and not admit distraction under the excuse of intending to say the penance over again.

In saying the penance let us endeavour to unite it with the infinite satisfaction of Jesus Christ, who alone can impart to our works and prayers their satisfactory value and merit before God.

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE CONFESSOR AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTION.

In this chapter we have to continue to treat of matters in connection with the Sacrament of Penance. Some important points that affect nuns remain yet to be spoken of and they may be arranged as follows:—

1. The dispositions of the Canon Law in regard to the Confessors of nuns?

2. Spiritual direction, which belongs to the Confessor and not to the Superioress—Manifestation of Conscience.

3. Special direction required in the cases of the scrupulous, and souls that receive extraordinary favours from God.

1. The dispositions of Canon Law in regard to the Confessors of nuns are the following taken from Bouix.\*

1. It is ordained in general that for each Convent of nuns only one Confessor be appointed, and that it is not lawful for each nun to choose her own Confessor according to her own will.†

2. The law enacted by the Council of Trent‡ ordaining that besides the *ordinary* Confessor an *extraordinary* be appointed by the Bishop or other Superiors two or three times a year, to hear the Confessions of all the Sisters should, according to Benedict XIV., be observed in the case of all nuns, even those who have not Enclosure; and also in the cases of all communities of women and their pupils who live in the Convent.

3. The selection and appointment of the *extraordinary* Confessor as well as the *ordinary* belongs to the Bishop of the Diocese. A Regular Prelate who may have the power of appointing the *ordinary* Confessor to nuns subject to him, can also appoint the *extraordinary*, and should do so twice or three times a year, in the same manner as already mentioned in regard to the Bishop. As, practically speaking, all nuns in these countries, and in our day, depend on the Bishop or Ordinary of the Diocese, as regards jurisdiction in the tribunal of penance, I shall therefore omit any further reference to the Regular Prelate in connection with this subject.

4. Not only is an *extraordinary* Confessor to be given to the whole community two or three times a year, but also to any individual nun who may ask for a special Confessor in the following cases:—1st. If a nun is seriously ill, and if she ask for a special Confessor, her request should be granted. 2ndly. If a nun cannot confess to the *ordinary* Confessor, except with great difficulty on account of the great dislike or repugnance which she experiences, then an *extraordinary* should be allowed to come to her. 3rdly. Even for the sole reason of spiritual consolation and progress, in some instances, a special Confessor may be granted to a nun who should ask for it, provided that on the part of the nun or on the part

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\* De jure Regularium Pars 5, Cap. II. † Benedict XIV. Bulla Pastoralis.

‡ C. 10, Sess. 25.

of the Confessor asked for, there may be nothing from which spiritual progress or benefit may not be expected.

5. The *extraordinary* Confessor may be sent by the Bishop at any time of the year, and for as many days as he may choose to appoint him. It is the custom in some places to send him every four months. In other places, and especially in England, the Ember Weeks are the times appointed for the *extraordinary*. During the time of his visit to the Convent, the office of the *ordinary* ceases, so that there may not be two Confessors there at the same time.

6. The nuns are not bound to confess to the *extraordinary* Confessor; but even if they do not wish to confess they are all obliged to present themselves to him, and at least they can ask his blessing. Unless there is some particular difficulty, they should, according to common sense, confess to him, as he does not go there simply to give blessings.

7. The *ordinary* Confessor for nuns can only be approved for three years for the same Convent. Which time having elapsed he would require the permission of the S. Congregation to continue to hear confessions or to be Confessor again in the same Convent. This restriction is not observed everywhere, and in some places it cannot be observed on account of the scarcity of Confessors; and ordinarily speaking, the approbation may continue as long as the Bishops wish, and until it is withdrawn.

The above are selected from a number of other dispositions, given by Feraris, in regard to Confessors of nuns, but these provisions are sufficient to be observed and to be known.

There is a special question as to whether these regulations are to be applied to communities of nuns who have only simple vows and are not bound to Papal Enclosure.

Bouix in answering this question states:—

1. It is to be held that the Bishops can ordain that nuns cannot confess except to the Confessor who is specially approved for them. This Benedict XIV. supposes in his Bull *pastoralis*, as he wishes to extend to all Communities of women and their pupils, even though not having Enclosure, the Tridentine law of giving them an *extraordinary* Confessor twice or three times a year. And what need could there be of an *extraordinary* Confessor if they were free to confess to any of the approved Priests in the Diocese?

2. The general practice is that Bishops, in reality, do approve special Confessors for these communities, and grant them *extraordinary* Confessors at certain times.

3. Where this practice exists, it is certain that when the Bishop simply approves a Priest for confessions in the diocese he does not thereby give him "*faculties*" for these communities; otherwise he would not approve of some *especially* for them, or appoint *extraordinary* Confessors for them at the stated times.

4. In the *formula* of granting the diocesan faculties there is usually the restricting clause *non tamen monialium*, which is to be understood of nuns in general, either with or without solemn vows.

All the dispositions, therefore, which are given in regard to the Confessors of nuns in general apply to Congregations of nuns with only *simple* vows as well as to those with *solemn* vows, except the rules which apply to Papal Enclosure which cannot be applied when there is no Enclosure.

A further question is asked as to whether these nuns, when lawfully out of their Convent, may be absolved by any approved priest?

Certainly they may, because the Constitutions of Gregory XV. *Inscrutable*, and of other Pontiffs, which forbid nuns to confess to any other priest except the Confessor specially approved for nuns, are not to be understood to apply except to nuns living in their Convents: *de Monialibus in Monasteriis degentibus*. They suppose, as was the case in those days, that nuns were always within the Enclosure. Every Confessor, therefore, even though not specially approved for nuns, can lawfully and validly absolve all nuns who present themselves to him in the ordinary tribunal of penance, and there is no general law of the Church which prevents a Superioress from giving her nuns leave to go out to confession, or the nuns from confessing to any Confessor, when out of their Convent with permission and for a just reason.

It may, however, be against the particular laws of the Convent, or the particular precepts of Superiors, but these could not affect the validity of the priest's absolution.

Prudence and regular order would require that this should not be done habitually or without a just reason; as, for example, when the Sisters should otherwise remain a long time without confession; or when the case is such that the Superioress would be obliged to grant a nun an *extraordinary* Confessor, or any other just and sufficient cause.

Feraris says that nuns cannot without a just cause refuse the *ordinary* or *extraordinary* Confessor appointed, and ask for another, but this they can do for a just and sufficient reason.

As a general rule, it would be wrong for them to question

the ability of the Confessor in regard to his duties. It is said that he ought to be learned, pious, and experienced, but his qualifications in this respect are sure to be well tested before he is approved to hear the confessions of nuns; and the Sisters need not be afraid of offending God in what they do in obedience to those duly appointed for the direction of their souls.

*1. The Spiritual direction of the Convent. Manifestation of Conscience.*

The spiritual direction of the Convent usually belongs to the Confessor. It would not be to the advantage of the Convent to have two persons, a *Confessor* and *Director*, for the spiritual affairs of one Community; for it would be almost impossible that two persons, no matter how good their intentions, should direct in the same manner and inspire the same spirit. The nuns would begin to make comparisons, preference would be shown to one, tastes differ and some would prefer the Confessor and others the Director, and thus a division would be caused in the community.

The Confessor, as such, has no authority in the government of the Convent or in its management. He should have nothing to do with appointing the Sisters to their different offices or with the manner in which they discharge their functions. When consulted by the Superioress, he can give her useful advice, in regard to the affairs of the Convent, but in all that regards the nuns let his intervention be wise and prudent, so as to keep carefully reserved to himself the interior secrets of conscience manifested to him by his spiritual children as their director.

His duties therefore are chiefly spiritual, that is, to direct the souls entrusted to his charge in the spirit of their vocation and according to the Rules of their Institute. That direction will be the more sure, the more wise and useful, which confines Religious souls within the limits of their Rules and constitutions and leads them to the special end of their Institute, by the practice of the virtues of their state, and which does not permit them to undertake novelties in the way of virtue or to introduce a spirit foreign to their vocation.

In the spiritual direction of the nuns, the authority of the Confessor need not interfere with the authority of the Superioress, and the Superioress need never take upon herself the duties and responsibilities of the Confessor; and their respective authorities should be preserved, especially in regard to *penances*, *Holy Communion* and the *manifestation of conscience*.\*

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\* The notes on these subjects are taken chiefly from Fr. Gautrelet's *Traite de L'Etat Religieux*. (Appendice Art. 2, S. 8.)

1. *In regard to penances, fasts, etc.* The Superioress can certainly impose penances on her subjects, in punishment of faults committed against the Rules; she can also permit a Sister to perform some penances which she may think useful for her spiritual advancement, provided they be not excessive or imprudent. Prudence is necessary in all these matters, for as it is necessary to excite to virtue the negligent and slothful, so it is necessary to restrain the fervent within the bounds of discretion.

The Confessor as spiritual physician, can also impose penances on the persons whom he directs, or permit them to perform penances. But in imposing penances on nuns or permitting them, it is necessary to keep in view their duties and the requirements of the regular observance of the Convent, lest they should impose or permit anything opposed to it or that would interfere with other Religious duties, such for example; as rising an hour before the appointed time in the morning; to watch for an hour before the B. Sacrament after the others go to rest at night; to be absent from the recreation for the sake of greater solitude; to fast oftener than the others and to abstain when the others do not, etc.

2. *In regard to Holy Communion.* My advice, in general, on this point is, to leave the Sacraments entirely to the priest or Confessor, because he alone can judge of the interior dispositions of the soul and whether the nun should approach Holy Communion or not. Let the Superioress therefore not take upon herself the responsibility of forbidding a Sister to go to Holy Communion, when it is communion day, and when she is allowed to receive Holy Communion by the Confessor. Should the Confessor forbid a Sister to go to Communion, the Superioress could not permit her to go, without exposing the Sister to the danger of approaching this august Sacrament, without the necessary dispositions. She may however, on special occasions, as for example on a particular feast, the anniversary of a death, etc, allow a Sister to go to communion without formal permission from the Confessor; because when not against Rule, this would be to the spiritual advantage of the Sister, to the edification of the Community and for the benefit of others, especially the suffering souls in purgatory.

In regard to communions of Rule, the superioress should certainly call attention to it, when they are frequently omitted. But in speaking of and representing these omissions, the greatest charity and prudence should be observed, especially in some cases. Some may have a legitimate reason for staying away from communion, and as scruples, interior troubles, anxieties, and unfounded

fears are generally the causes that withhold them from communion, they are more to be pitied than blamed.

3. *As to the account or manifestation of conscience.* Its object is to make known to Superiors the dispositions of our nature, so that Superiors may be the better able to direct us in our religious lives and duties. By this means, nuns may obtain consolation in their sorrows and counsel in their necessities. And by this means also the Superioress may the better know her subjects, that in the distribution of offices she may not place a Sister where she would be unhappy and miserable; or appoint to the same office, two of opposite characters between whom there can be no mutual sympathy.

The manifestation of conscience may be either to the Confessor or to the Superioress, and it may be well to explain the difference between these two.

To the Confessor it is made in the tribunal of penance, and it concerns sins, temptations and all that appertains to the interior conscience. Rigorously speaking, it is sufficient to declare to him all that is necessary to enable him to judge of the state of the penitent and her dispositions for the reception of the Sacraments.

The manifestation to be made by nuns to the Superioress is quite voluntary. There is no law which obliges a nun to make a manifestation of conscience to her Superioress. And if a Sister has a repugnance or a dislike to do so, she is not obliged and the Superioress cannot exact it from her.

Whenever a Sister does wish to make this manifestation, let her know that it must not extend to faults and sins that are the object of the Sacrament of Penance. It should not refer to the interior conscience, so much as to the exterior conduct.

Father Gautrelet gives the following points for this manifestation that may serve as a guide both to Superiors and their subjects.

1. Whether the nun is happy in her vocation?
2. Whether she experiences any great difficulty in the observance of the vows and Rules?
3. Whether she is oppressed by any sorrow or affliction, and what is its cause?
4. Whether she likes her office or finds any difficulty in it?
5. Whether she is faithful in her exercises of piety or feels any special devotion?
6. What progress she is making in perfection, and in what virtue she most fails?

7. Whether she is faithful in the practice of penance?
8. Whether she has any aversion or particular friendship for any of her companions?
9. Whether she has noticed anything amongst the Sisters that was not edifying, or whether, on the contrary, she is edified by their conduct and conversation?

This account should be given with humility, simplicity, and confidence on the part of the subject, and received by the Superioress with sweetness, compassion, prudence, reserve, and discretion.

III. *Some cases that require special spiritual care and direction.*

In speaking of spiritual direction, there are two classes of persons who require special care and direction, inasmuch as they experience special difficulties in the spiritual life. These are, 1st, the scrupulous and those of tender consciences, and 2nd, those whom God may favour in a special manner, by visions, revelations, or supernatural manifestations.

Let us speak of these two classes separately.

I. *The scrupulous and those of weak or tender consciences.*

1. The principal direction to be given to all who are scrupulous, is to obey their Confessor blindly. This should be their rule of action. It is not necessary to remove or put away or act according to a scrupulous conscience; because, it is not the real conscience, but only a vain apprehension or blind or cloak covering the true conscience, and those labouring under it are always justified in doing what the Confessor tells them.

2. All doubts, in the case of the scrupulous, should be interpreted in their favour, and in the lenient sense; and when they doubt, they may always conclude as a certainty that they have not offended God. It may sometimes happen, that a Confessor may forbid such souls to mention their doubts; or, he may tell them simply to answer his questions by *yes* or *no*, and say nothing themselves.

3. The scrupulous should not confess their scruples as sins, neither should they make general confessions, unless the Confessor think it necessary, because, it is well known that for such souls a general confession is calculated rather the more to disturb their consciences than to bring them peace.

4. They should judge nothing a mortal sin unless it is clearly and manifestly mortal, and, it is said, that sometimes they are to be forbidden to confess certain sins unless they can swear that they are mortal. As to being able to *swear*,—there should be



care as to using the test, as it only serves to puzzle them all the more, and some souls become so agitated by scruples that they imagine they consent to everything that presents itself to their imagination, and they cannot form any correct judgment about their moral acts.

These are some of the rules to be applied to the scrupulous in general. I shall now mention some of the particular points on which pious souls have doubts and scruples:—

1. Those who doubt about the integrity of past confessions.

They are advised not to go back on the past, except when they are certain of not having confessed the sin before. Going back on the past only aggravates the troubled state of their mind. Let them not spend a long time in examining their conscience. The Confessor may sometimes tell them to go to confession without an examination of conscience; because he knows, that if they have committed a wilful sin they are not likely to forget it, and besides, the whole life of the scrupulous becomes a continual examination of conscience.

2. Those who doubt about their contrition in past confessions and the purpose of amendment. Let them know that sufficient sorrow may be had in an instant, and it is sufficient in any degree, provided it be true contrition, and it does not require tenderness of heart, or tears of compunction, or sensible feeling of any kind. The desire, even, of sorrow, or sorrow for not feeling sorry, is sufficient proof that true sorrow is there, though they do not realise it. As to the purpose of amendment, it is sufficient that they have no will to commit any mortal sin, or that they would rather die than commit a deliberate mortal sin. Even though they may judge, that through human frailty they are likely to fall into the same sin again, let them understand that such knowledge is compatible with the firm resolution of not sinning; because one is an act of the intellect and the other an act of the will.

3. Those who are troubled with doubts and scruples in regard to thoughts of infidelity, or blasphemy, or other dishonest thoughts. These thoughts are rather to be despised than feared. From the dislike which the souls have for such thoughts, and the very anxiety of conscience caused by them, it is evident that they are not accountable for them. Let them not dispute with such thoughts, or argue, or try to prove against them, but rather distract the mind by some simple means, and think of something else. In confession, they need not particularise them, or, in fact, mention them at all, unless they are certain of having consented

to them. When I advise that they distract themselves in some simple way, I do not mean that they are to shake the head, or strike the breast, or begin making the sign of the Cross, because these things affect the sanity of the mind rather than the tranquility of the conscience. It is better not to pay any attention whatever to such thoughts, and let the penitent rest satisfied that a Confessor would not treat them lightly if there was danger of any grievous sin in connection with them.

4. Those who are scrupulous about the obligation of reciting the Office. They should not be allowed to repeat any portion of the Office. Let them not be too anxious about the *attention*; because that anxiety destroys the attention itself, and it is well for them to be satisfied with only the *external attention*. It sometimes may happen, that on account of scruples a Religious should be forbidden altogether to say Office, at least for a time, on account of the great difficulty experienced in saying Office by those who are scrupulous.

5. Those who wish to return again and again to confession before going to communion. This, according to St. Liguori, is not necessary for anyone who may, through forgetfulness, have omitted a sin in confession;\* and it is not therefore necessary for these souls to return to confession before going to communion. Besides, this might easily be the work of the devil in order to distract them, for whilst he suggests returning to confession, the soul is distracted from its devotions and from the preparation for communion, and therefore this fear or scruple not only does not help the soul, but impedes the operation of the divine grace. Hence Gerson† says that such an immoderate care of purity of conscience and too great fear of sin is not always good, because when we fear God so much, we do not seem to love him sufficiently. And besides, we should remember that without a special revelation from God no one can be perfectly sure of being fit for Holy Communion, because *we know not whether we are worthy of love or hatred*.

6. Those who doubt about their salvation because they experience no sweetness of devotion, but spiritual desolation in all their acts. Such devotion and sensible fervour are not always efficacious; neither are they infallible signs of charity, or apt to make us more perfect. Many of such things are natural, and may be found even in sinners. Neither is aridity a sign of sin or an argument for reprobation. Sensible sweetness and devotion

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\* Hom. Apost. Tract. XV. N. 23.

† In tr. divers. diab. lent. lit. 13.

may help to goodness and fervour, but it may happen sometimes that, on account of our weakness, they may be made the occasion of danger and presumption; and aridity, on the other hand, may serve to place the soul in the spirit of humility before God, *who resists the proud and gives His grace to the humble*. In a state of desolation therefore the soul may be more pleasing to God than in a state of great devotion.

II. The other class of devout souls, who need special direction, consists of those who are so favoured by God as to receive *revelations, visions, or supernatural apprehensions*. I take visions here in the general sense of manifestations by God, made either mediately or immediately to the human mind of that which is naturally beyond its reach. All visions are by no means to be treated lightly; for, it is certain that men have often had converse with others than their human fellow-creatures concerning God, His attributes, His designs, etc., and that this was by God's own action. I need only refer to some scriptural facts: the three whom Abraham entertained; He to whom Moses spoke in the bush and on Sinai; the interlocutor of the Prophets; He that spoke on Thabor; He who accosted Paul on the way to Damascus; He who instructed Peter as to the vocation of the Gentiles. All these manifestations are in our sense visions. As to historical facts in post scriptural times St. Ignatius (Martyr), St. Cyprian, and other Ecclesiastical writers of the early ages speak of visions as common in their day; and the processes of the canonization of the Saints afford in every age sufficient proof of the existence of visions which come from God.

Concerning these manifestations we would point out the following directions:—

In the first place, souls thus affected should not be supposed all at once to be under a delusion; neither should these visions be taken all at once as coming from the Holy Ghost. Virtue does not consist in them, but in good works, and in the increase of grace and charity; for revelations have sometimes been made to the bad—Balaam, Caiphas and others. Those who receive such favours should not therefore regard themselves as saints. At the same time, we must have great respect for such manifestations according to the advice of St. Paul.\* *Extinguish not the spirit. Despise not prophecies, but prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

How are revelations and true visions to be distinguished from false ones?

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\* 1 Thess. v.

To guard against deception and error in such matters it is necessary to pray and to investigate the case carefully. Humility is also required, because God has hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them to little ones.\* Great prudence and wise judgment are also required. We should therefore consider, 1st, the person who makes the revelation; 2ndly, the person to whom the revelation is made; and 3rdly, the nature of the thing revealed, and its effects or results.

1st. From whom does the vision or revelation come? Whether from a good or a bad spirit? A good angel, we are told, begins by exhorting to what is good, and perseveres in it; the bad at first urges to good, and then inclines to evil. The good angel in the beginning causes fear, but immediately brings consolation and comfort; the bad stupefies in the beginning, and leaves desolation. Also we must inquire in what form does he appear? Because if in the form of a beast or a monster, or human shape, but in some way curious or deformed, he is to be considered a bad angel.

2ndly. The person who receives the vision. The disposition of the person should be considered, whether bilious or melancholy, because such people are given to imaginations and phantasies. Whether in bad health or the brain in any way affected; also, age has to be considered; because if very old, there is always danger of lightness of head, and if very young there is danger of lightness of heart. It will also help if we can know a person's inclination or *hobby*, St. Leo says: "That the devil takes occasion of doing harm from what he perceives to occupy a person's mind." Because if affected with strong inclinations towards what is supposed to be revealed, then the vision proceeds either from oneself or from the devil. This may be known in the case of a penitent, who when forbidden by the Confessor to think of or pay any attention to such things should be sad and begin to speak against the Confessor, then the vision is from the evil spirit; because she who is guided by the Spirit of God is not made sad by the command of a Confessor but will try to conform to it. It is also of importance to consider whether the person is educated, to whom does she confess, is she affected by singular signs of penances and devotions not approved by her Superiors, whether a Novice or one advanced in virtue? Above all, we have to consider whether she is obedient to her Superiors

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\* Luke x. 21.

and her Confessor; because if she fails in this, she certainly exposes herself to the danger of error and deception. In separating herself from the guidance of her Confessor, she impedes the medium through which God ordinarily communicates His will. It is a sign of deception if she speaks to others of her revelations, as this shows pride and vanity; frequently asking conferences on the subject with her Confessor; long accounts of her vision, and apparitions and apprehensions are also signs of deception. Of those deceived in this way Gerson says: *Expertis Credite nominatim Augustino et Bonaventuro, vix est alter pestis vel efficacior ad nocendum vel insanabilior.*

3rdly. *The revelation itself and its effects.*

As to the revelation itself it may be noticed, 1. Whether it contains anything false, because in this case, it cannot proceed from the spirit of truth. Therefore it is necessary to consider whether it is conformable to Scripture, to faith and morals, to theology and to the doctrine and traditions of the Church.

2. Whether it is necessary or concerns a matter of grave importance, because revelations that are said to teach useless and trifling things are delusions.

3. The revelation that makes known the faults of others and their sins are to be suspected, especially if an interior or exterior voice be heard telling such things.

4. If it suggests even something good but extraordinary and singular it is open to suspicion, *e.g.* to fast on bread and water.

As to the effects of revelation we have to inquire:

1. Do these communications incline the soul to virtue, to good works, to an efficacious desire and determination to suffer for Christ, to contempt of oneself and to self-knowledge?

Do they bring peace, light and certainty, and do they leave after them an increase of the love of God and reverence for divine things? Are they accompanied by the cross and by mortification, and do they tend to the manifestation of the faith and the utility of the Church?

Finally, consider whether the holy fear of God is preserved in the soul, that fear which makes it more cautious and vigilant in its obligations lest God should be displeased with it. This is one of the best effects according to the advice of St. Paul to the Philippians: *Work out your salvation in fear and trembling.* On the contrary if there arise in the soul too much confidence and facility without circumspection or holy fear, the supposed revelation is the work of the evil spirit; for this spirit takes away from the soul the fear of God, that it may lead it into sin as it

happened to Eve when the devil said to her, *as, to the Rules, the death.\**

To illustrate real visions by an example, we may take the B. Margaret Mary Alacoque, a nun of the Convent in Paray in France. This nun received manifestations as to the will of God that men should be more devout to the S. Heart of Jesus. Her visions have all the signs and conditions required.

1. They were beyond the power of nature and she was not asleep or insane when she received them.

2. They were not false because the subsequent spread of the devotion to the S. Heart, which was revealed to her depended upon contingent causes, namely, the free will of men; and her visions in this respect were afterwards known to be verified by facts.

3. Her visions were not diabolical but from God. 1. The object, namely, devotion to the S. Heart of Jesus was good and pious. 2. She herself was virtuous and discreet, for she has been canonized by the Church. 3. Her virtue suffered no diminution by reason of her visions as is evident from the history of her life. 4. Prudent Directors and Confessors believed in the reality of her visions. This is sufficiently proved from the fact that she was guided in regard to them by the advice of Father de la Columbiere, the greatest spiritual director of his day

## CHAPTER V.

### THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

*He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him.†*

Pope Innocent reminds us that there are three things in this Sacrament, the form of bread and wine, the truth of flesh and blood, and the virtue of unity and charity, as seen by the eye, believed in the mind, and felt in the heart.

It is through the Holy Eucharist that Christ works out for each individual the great end of the Incarnation. *I am come, He said, that they may have life and may have it more abundantly.‡*

\* These notes on revelations are chiefly taken from Cajetan de Alexandris. (Conf. Mon. Cap. VIII. §. iii.)

† St. John, vi. 57.

‡ St. John, x. 10.

And her Confessor; *Charist* He communicates this life to man. *This is herself to the* *h cometh down from heaven; that if any* *man eat of this bread he* *shall live for ever and the bread which I will give is my flesh for* *the life of the world. As the living Father hath sent me, and I* *live by the Father, so he that eateth me the same also shall live by* *me.\**

Through this Sacrament God effects His union with man: *He that eateth my flesh, etc.* It is, therefore, through it that the world is sanctified and God glorified. It is the most intimate communication of the Divinity with man before he enjoys the beatific vision.

This Sacrament is, therefore, the food, the life, and happiness of the Religious soul. A Convent without the Blessed Sacrament is a dreary abode, and nothing on earth can compensate for its absence. For the direction of nuns, several questions concerning this Sacrament have to be examined, especially concerning the time or the days for receiving Communion; the dispositions required for a worthy Communion; the preparation for Communion and the Thanksgiving after it. I shall now deal with these questions in their order, and confine my instructions as far as possible to what may be useful for Religious.

1. How often should nuns receive Holy Communion?

As to any obligation of receiving Holy Communion every month the same answer must be given in this case as in that of going to confession every month, namely, no express law of the Church obliges nuns to go every month to Communion.

In regard to daily Communion, the answer is given by a decree of the S. Congregation, 12th February, 1769, as follows. Those nuns who ask to receive Holy Communion every day should be admonished to approach on the days prescribed by the Rules of the Institute. And if there be any nun so advanced in virtue, or so moved by the spirit of piety, that she may be deemed worthy of receiving oftener, she may be allowed to do so by the Superior, who is the Confessor in this case. By the rubrics of the missal, however, the faithful are not allowed to Communicate on Good Friday. On Holy Saturday they are not allowed to Communicate, except at the one public Mass. Private Masses are not allowed on that day, and, therefore, no private Communions are allowed, except to the dying.

In a Community it is advisable that all should submit them-

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\* St. John, vi. 50, 52 and 58. Moriarty's Allocutions.

selves, even in regard to their Communion, to the Rules which they have embraced; as it is always an inconvenience both to the Community and to individuals in it, when the Rule is disregarded and when one departs from the regular order of things. This is a reason why the Confessor may be less severe and exacting in the case of an individual nun, in regard to all the dispositions required for frequent Communion, that her frequent absence from a Communion of Rule may not cause surprise or irregularity. Of course, I suppose her to have the essential disposition, namely, the state of grace. But this is also a reason why the Religious, on her part, should endeavour all the more strenuously to acquire the necessary perfection for receiving this Holy Sacrament as often as the others, and as often as it is prescribed by Rule.

It is evident that no Rule can impose the obligation of Communion when one has not the necessary dispositions to receive it. The Confessor may, therefore, sometimes refuse to allow a penitent to go to Communion as often as the Rules prescribe, that is, when he judges that she does not profit by frequent Communion, and has not all the dispositions required for it, even though she may be in a state of grace.

With the permission of the Confessor, a nun may Communicate oftener than the Rules prescribe. When this is done the permission has to be obtained, not from the Bishop or from the Superiors, but from the Confessor. But in this going to Communion out of time, and oftener than the others, one should guard against illusion. It is an illusion for nuns to make all the perfection consist in the *more frequent* reception of the Sacraments. Singularity and emulation would impede the progress of any Community, and be to the ruin of its members, and these can be known to exist when those who Communicate out of time begin to consider themselves holier and better than the others who do not Communicate so often. Let, therefore, the nun who wishes to go to Communion oftener than the others make known her desire and her reason to the Confessor and abide by his decision; and in granting or refusing the request, the Confessor is always to be guided by the needs of the soul, and the fruits produced in it by Holy Communion.

2. What are the dispositions required for worthily receiving this Sacrament?

Before speaking of the dispositions of soul, I may say a word or two about the disposition of the body in regard to the fast required for Communion.

Can one go to Communion who doubts whether it was after



midnight or not when she took something to eat or drink? St. Liguori says yes, for the violation of the fast is uncertain and doubtful, and this cannot take away the certain right one has of going to H. Communion. It is also to be noted that in order to break the fast it is necessary to eat or drink something *per modum cibi et potus*, that is, after the manner of eating and drinking. Therefore, some small drops of water swallowed by accident in washing or rinsing the mouth or teeth would not break the fast, or to swallow drops of blood flowing from the teeth or gums, etc., would not break the fast; but the slightest morsel of food or drop of drink taken wilfully as food or drink from without, would be sufficient for the breaking of the fast; for this does not depend on the quantity, but on the fact of eating and drinking at all.

Canon Oakeley describes this fast as follows:—

“This fast is not only obligatory, but indispensable, except in the case of persons in danger of death, who receive the Holy Sacrament, in the way of Viaticum (*i.e.*, as a provision for their passage into the unseen world), and in one or two other extreme cases, as, for instance, when priests, in order to avoid some yet graver violation of the Church's rules, are allowed to receive it, after having previously, and, of course, without foresight of such emergency, broken their fast.

“The fast before Communion is what is called *physical, i.e.*, natural fast, and precludes the swallowing of any food or liquid whatever; so that water, taken even by accident, would debar the person from going to Communion on the same day.

“A drop swallowed by accident along with the natural secretion of the mouth, is a case excepted by the rubric from the general law.”\*

It is not a fault to cough after Communion, and there is no danger in doing so, provided there is no particle of the host in the mouth, for the expectoration does not come from the stomach, but from another source and by another passage.

One should remain about a quarter of an hour after Communion without taking anything to eat, out of respect for the B. Sacrament. A reasonable cause, such as weakness or the like, would excuse one from observing this rule.

We have now to speak of the dispositions of soul.

As far as the Sacrament is concerned, the oftener we can receive the more pleasing it is to our B. Saviour, and the more profitable to our souls. St. Thomas calls the practice of frequent

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\* Ceremonies of the Mass, page 82.

Communion useful, laudable, and salutary, and this he shows, 1. From the practice of the primitive Church;\* 2 From the testimony of the Holy Fathers. 3. From the mind of the Church expressed in the Council of Trent,† where it admonishes, exhorts, entreats, and beseeches all Christians that they so live as to be able to receive frequently the *super-substantial bread*, and in Sess. XXII. c. 6. it exhorts all those present at Mass to communicate, not only by spiritual Communion, but by the Sacramental reception of the Holy Eucharist, that they may receive more abundantly the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice. 4. From the nature of the Sacrament itself; for it is given as spiritual food, that it may effect in the soul what corporal food does for the body; and this food is taken daily. Moreover, the manna which was a figure of the H. Eucharist, was given every day to the people in the desert; therefore, this Sacrament may be taken daily, and it is on that account called by Christ *panis quotidianus*, our daily bread.

I have said on the *part of the Sacrament*, for frequent Communion is not useful to all men, on account of the impediments which they place in the way of its worthy reception. St. Thomas says that it is useful only "As often as a man finds himself prepared for it." By a decree of Innocent XI. the following rule is laid down: "The frequent access to this Sacrament is to be left to the judgment of the Confessor, who, according to the condition of the persons, can form his opinion about increasing or diminishing the number of Communions, from the purity of their consciences, the fruit they derive from frequent Communion, and their progress in piety.

The first condition and the essential one for a good Communion is the *state of grace*.

I need not remind nuns of the enormity of the sin of sacrilege or of a bad Communion. Dr. Moriarty thus speaks of it: ‡

To the sacrilegious Communicant Christ addresses the sorrowful expostulation when she approaches the holy table: *Amice ad quid venisti?* friend whereto art thou come? When she receives the S. Host He says: "Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss"? and to those around it may be said *Ecce manus tradentis me mecum est in mensa*§ "Behold the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." Of Judas St. John says|| *after the morsel Satan entered into him* and our Lord said a

\* Act. Apost., ii. 46.

† Sess. XIII. c. 8.

‡ Allocation on the H. Eucharist

§ Luke xxii. 21.

|| xiii. 27.

terrible word descriptive of that man's state. "*Unus ex vobis diabolus est.*" Such is the nature of the sin of a sacrilegious Communion

2. The Council of Trent† explains that for one wishing to receive Communion, if conscious of mortal sin, contrition is not sufficient of itself, but by special precept it is necessary to go to confession beforehand. Of course, it might happen accidentally that one might not have an opportunity of going to confession, and might go to Communion if contrite, as in the following cases.

1. Danger of death when no Priest can be had, one could receive communion from a deacon. 2. Grave scandal such as in the case of the communicant being at the altar rails and there remembering some sin when she could not come away without occasioning surprise or scandal, she should make an act of contrition, and then communicate. 3. The danger of profanation, that is, in order to conceal and rescue the sacred particles from the hands of the sacrilegious about to profane the altar, it would be lawful to consume them even not fasting, if there were no other means of saving them.

I have already answered the cases of one doubting whether she is in mortal sin or not, and that of the person who has forgotten a sin in confession, and remembers it before Communion. In the case of doubt, the nun may receive, and in the other case the advice may be repeated here. If the sin is venial there is no necessity to confess it, if mortal she may confess it before Communion, if she can do so conveniently; but this is not absolutely necessary. She has received absolution from this sin which she remembers, at the same time as she was absolved from the others. The obligation of submitting it to the *power of the keys* of the Church in another confession remains, but there is no law obliging her to do this before going to Communion. She must however accuse herself of it in her next confession.

3. It is said that in frequent and daily communicants there should be the will sedulously to avoid venial sins, especially deliberate venial sins, and to remove all affection to them; and if through human frailty, they fall into venial sins, they should habituate themselves to be sorry immediately after and to guard against relapsing into them.

These are the principal conditions or dispositions of souls required for making a good Communion, and as Religious usually live in such dispositions, they should not too easily give way to

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\* John vi. 71.

† Sess. 13, c. 7.

vain doubts and fears that would prevent them going to Communion.

St. Leonard, of Port Maurice, in his *Manuale Sacro*, gives some of the difficulties and excuses which nuns may make in regard to approaching Holy Communion. I here briefly give a few of them with their answers.

1st Excuse. I feel no devotion, and if I look into myself I find that I am just the same, and I always fall into the very same venial sins.

Ans. The Holy Communion will preserve you against mortal sin, and if no other advantage is gained, it is a great blessing and privilege to be preserved from becoming worse.

2nd Excuse. When I communicate only seldom I seem to have more devotion and more application.

Ans. He who eats seldom has a better appetite, but by his long fasts he soon becomes weaker: so it happens in regard to the Holy Communion, he who receives only seldom, being deprived of this heavenly food becomes weak, loses the vigour of his soul, and is more disposed to fall away.

3rd Excuse. I have not time to prepare. Ans. Make one Communion a preparation for another like St. Aloysius. Intend that all your actions and all your duties may be a preparation for Communion.

4th Excuse. I am not worthy. I am always so much distracted.

Ans. Are you in mortal sin? If not, you may lawfully communicate, and with fruit to your soul. For the rest, in a rigorous sense, not even the Blessed Virgin would be worthy, not by reason of any sin, but by reason of the infinite distance between the worthiness of the Creator and the creature.

5th Excuse. I will have to render an account to God for all my Communion. Ans. Most certainly; but remember that you will have to render an account also of all the Communion you neglect to receive, and the result of your negligence in the Convent and towards your companions.

6th Excuse. I feel myself guilty of so many imperfections, defects, and venial sins; and, although I go to confession, I commit the same faults again before I go to Communion. How can I communicate with a conscience so guilty?

Ans. This has been already answered by the Council of Trent, which teaches that we can lawfully communicate when not conscious of mortal sin. . . . Make an act of contrition for all other faults and then go to Communion.

7th Excuse. My Confessor does not wish me to go so often to Communion, and he does not seem pleased with so many communions.

Answer. Obey your Confessor and offer to God your obedience. Also examine yourself on the cause why your Confessor does not wish you to communicate so often. Is it because he does not find in you that hunger or desire, or the proper dispositions for frequent Communion? Remove the obstacles, and then he will permit you to go to Communion as often as the other Sisters in the community.

St. Leonard reminds Confessors of the example given by our B. Saviour in the 14th chapter of St. Luke, in the parable of the poor, the weak, the blind, and the lame, who were introduced to partake of the Feast.

For all these reasons be careful never to omit any Communion permitted by your Rules. And that you may receive the effects and fruits of the Holy Communion there are two other things to be specially attended to, namely, *the preparation before, and the thanksgiving after communion.*

In speaking of the preparation and thanksgiving for Holy Communion, I know of no better instructions than those left us by St. Liguori, from whom I take the following directions:—

*The Preparation for Holy Communion.*

“St. Francis de Sales says that our Saviour cannot be considered more lovingly or more tenderly in any action than in that of the Holy Communion, in which He annihilates Himself, as it were, and descends to unite Himself as food, to the hearts and bodies of His faithful. For this reason Gerson says; that there is no more efficacious means than Holy Communion to enkindle devotion and the love of God in the soul. For, in truth, if we speak of a thing pleasing to God, what can be more pleasing in His sight than to communicate? St. Dionysius teaches that love; above everything else, tends to perfect union, and what greater union can there be between the soul and Jesus than in Holy Communion? He has said, *He who eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me and I in him.*”

St. Augustine says that if you receive this Sacrament every day, Jesus will be always with you, and you will always advance in divine love. If we speak of the cure of our spiritual infirmities, what greater remedy can we have than Holy Communion, which is called by the Council of Trent “the antidote by which we are freed from daily faults and preserved from mortal sins?”

Cardinal Bona asks how is it that with so many Communion one does not see any profit in so many souls, and the same defects always appear in them? He answers, "The defect is not in the food, but in the dispositions of the recipient." Is it possible to hide fire in your breast without its burning you? "God is a consuming fire."\* He comes in the Holy Communion to enkindle this divine fire, and how then, says William of Paris, does one see this strange miracle, that in the midst of such a fire souls remain cold in divine love? All results from the little dispositions we have and the little preparation we make. Fire at once inflames the dry wood, but not so the green, because this is not disposed to catch fire. The Saints received great profit from their Communion, because they took care to dispose themselves well for it.

To prepare well for Holy Communion, two things are specially required. A great detachment from creatures, and a great desire to advance in Divine love. For the first, then, the soul should remove every attachment, and banish from the heart everything which is not for God. *He that is washed*, says our Saviour, *needeth not but to wash his feet but is clean wholly*† This signifies, as St. Bernard explains, that to receive the Sacrament with much fruit, it is necessary to be washed not only from mortal sins, but also clean as to the feet, that is, as to earthly affections; because these attachments are displeasing to God, and by soiling the soul they impede the effects of Holy Communion.

St. Gertrude once asked our Lord what preparation He desired of her for Holy Communion, and our Lord answered, "I desire nothing else but that you come to receive me emptied or void of thyself."

Secondly. It is necessary in the H. Communion to have a great desire to receive Jesus Christ and His holy love. "At this holy banquet," says Gerson, "only the hungry are satisfied." And before Him our B. Lady said in the Magnificat; *He hath filled the hungry with good things*, etc. Our Saviour one day said to S. Matilda, "There is no bee that alights on a flower to extract the honey with as great an *impetus* or desire as by the violence of love with which I come to souls in the H. Communion." If, therefore, Jesus Christ has so great a desire to come to our souls, is it not right that we should have a great desire to receive Him and His divine love? St. Francis de Sales teaches that the principal intention of the soul in communicating should be to advance in

\* Prov. vi. 27.

† John xiii. 10.

the love of God; that should be received with love which is communicated to us through love alone.

The following are the Acts to be made before Communion:—

1. An Act of Faith. 2. An Act of Hope or Confidence. 3. An Act of Love or Charity. 4. An Act of Humility. 5. An Act of Sorrow or Contrition. 6. An Act of Desire.

Finish by a prayer to our B. Lady to intercede for us that we may receive her Divine Son worthily.

*Thanksgiving after Communion.*

There is no prayer so pleasing to God, or so useful to the soul, as the prayer of thanksgiving after Communion. It is the opinion of many grave authors (Suarez, Gaetano and de Lugo) that the H. Communion, as long as the sacramental species remain, causes graces in the soul according as it is disposed, and corresponds by renewed acts of virtue. The Council of Florence, in a decree of Eugene IV., teaches that this H. Sacrament produces in the soul the same effects in a spiritual manner which earthly food produces in the body, which, when it enters the body, continues to operate according to the dispositions which it finds there. For this reason, some holy souls spent as much time as they could in thanksgiving after Communion. The venerable Fr. Avila, even on his missions, used to spend two hours in thanksgiving after Communion. Fr. Baltassar Alvarez used to say that one should make great account of the time after Communion, imagining that he hears from Christ Himself the words: *but, me you have not always with you.*

It is not, therefore, good immediately after Communion, to begin to read as some do; it is better to spend some little time in pious affections and in speaking with Jesus who, at that time is within us—repeating some short pious affections or sentiments over and over again as our Saviour Himself repeated the self-same prayer in the Garden of Olives. *And he prayed the third time, saying the self-same word.\**

In affections, therefore, and prayers the soul should treat with Jesus after Communion, being persuaded that the acts made in prayer at that time have more power and merit before God than at other times; for the soul is then united to Jesus, and these acts have greater value as coming from His divine presence. Besides this, during the time after Communion our B. Saviour is more disposed to grant us graces. St. Teresa says that our Saviour

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\* St. Matt. xxvi., 43.

after Communion places Himself in the soul as it were on a throne of graces, and says to it: *What wilt thou that I do for thee?* As if he would say: "I have come not only to give you graces, ask of me what you will and your request will be granted."

Oh! what treasures of grace you will receive devout soul! if you will continue to treat with Jesus after Communion at least for an hour or half-an-hour; and, during the time you may read some acts to assist your devotion."

For nuns engaged in many employments of the active life a half or at least a quarter of an hour is the time of thanksgiving. During the whole day, after Communion, you should often make use of affections and prayers to keep yourself more closely united with your Saviour whom you have that day received.

#### ACTS TO BE MADE AFTER COMMUNION.

1. An Act of Faith. 2. An Act of Welcome. 3. An Act of Thanksgiving. 4. An Act of Offering: "*Dilectus meus mihi et ego illi.*" 5. An Act of Petition: *Amen, amen I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in my name he will give it you.*

In conclusion say with Fr. Alphonsus Rodriguez, "*Amores mei dulcissimi, Jesus et Maria, pro vobis patiar, pro vobis moriar sim totus vester, sim nihil meus.*" Add the following invocations:—

Anima Christi sanctifica me.  
Corpus Christi salva me.  
Sanguis Christi inebria me.

Soul of Christ sanctify me.  
Body of Christ save me.  
Blood of Christ inebriate me.  
Water out of the side of Christ wash me.

Aqua lateris Christi lava me.  
Passio Christi conforta me.  
O Bone Jesu exaudi me.  
Intra tua vulnera absconde me.  
Ne permittas me seperari a Te.

Passion of Christ strengthen me.  
O good Jesus hear me.  
Hide me within Thy wound.  
Suffer me not to be separated from Thee.

Ab hoste maligno defende me.

Defend me from the malignant enemy.

In hora mortis meæ voca me.  
Et jube me venire ad Te.  
Ut cum Sanctis tuis laudem Te.

Call me at the hour of my death,  
And bid me come to Thee,  
That with Thy Saints I may praise Thee

In Sæcula Sæculorum. Amen.

For all eternity. Amen.

An indulgence of 300 DAYS may be gained every time the above invocations are repeated with a contrite heart. SEVEN YEARS AND SEVEN QUARANTINES every time they are repeated after Holy Communion, and a PLENARY INDULGENCE once a month for those who say them every day, and go to Confession and Communion, and visit a Church or public Oratory, and there pray for the intention of His Holiness the Pope.\* Granted by Pius IX. Die 9, Jan. 1854.

\* The Raccolta. "Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament."



I would also advise that the prayer "En Ego," etc., be said before a Crucifix after Holy Communion.

En ego, O bone et dulcissime Jesu, ante conspectum tuum genibus me provolvo ac maximo animi ardore te oro atque obtestor ut meum in cor vividos fidei, spei, et charitatis sensus, atque veram peccatorum meorum pœnitentiam, eaque emendandi firmissimam, voluntatem velis imprimere : dum magno animi affectu, et dolore tua quinque Vulnera mecum ipse considero, ac mente contemplor, illud præ oculis habens, quod jam in ore ponebat suo David Propheta de Te, O bone Jesu : "Foderunt manus meas et pedes meos. dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea."

O good and sweetest Jesus, before Thy face I humbly kneel, and with the greatest fervour of spirit I pray and beseech Thee to vouchsafe to fix deep in my heart lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, true contrition for my sins, and a most firm purpose of amendment, and whilst I contemplate with great sorrow and affection Thy five wounds, and ponder them over in my mind, having before my eyes the words which, long ago, David the prophet spoke in his own person concerning Thee, my Jesus : *Foderunt manus mea et pedes meos; dinumeraverunt omnia ossa mea* :—"They digged my hands and my feet; they numbered all my bones."\*

\* Ps. xxi. 17, 18.

Pope Pius VII., by a decree of the S. Congregation of Indulgences, dated April 10th, 1802, granted a Plenary Indulgence to all who shall devoutly say the above Prayer before any representation of Jesus Crucified, with contrite hearts, praying for the wants of Holy Church, after Confession and Communion.\*

The Hymn of St. Thomas : "Adoro Te Devote" may also be added to our other acts of devotion after receiving Holy Communion.

Adoro te devôte, latens Déitas,  
Quæ sub his figûris vere látitas ;  
Tibi se cor meum totum súbjicit,  
Quia te contémpfans totum déficit.  
Visus, gustus, tactus, in te fállitur,  
Sed auditu solo tuto créditur,  
Credo quidquid dixit Dei Filius ;

O Godhead hid devoutly I adore  
Thee,  
Who truly art within the forms  
before me ;  
To Thee, my heart I bow with  
bended knee,  
As failing quite in contemplating  
Thee.  
Sight, touch, and taste in Thee are  
each deceived ;  
The ear alone most safely is  
believed :  
I believe all the Son of God has  
spoken,

\* The Racolta. Jesus crucified.

Nil hoc verbo veritátis vérius.

In cruce latébat sola Déitas,

At hic latet simul et Humánitas ;

Ambo tamen credens atque cónfitens

Peto quod petivit latro pœnitens.

Plagas, sicut Thomas, non intúeor :

Deum tamen meum te confiteor.

Fac me tibi semper magis crédere,  
In te spem habère, te diligere.

O memoriále mortis Dómini !

Panis vivus, vitam præstans hómini !

Præsta meæ menti de te vivere,

Et te illi semper dulce sápere.

Pie pelicáne, Jesu Dómine,  
Me immúndum munda tuo Sán-  
guine :

Cujus una stilla salvum fácere

Totum mundum quit ob omni  
scélere.

Jesu, quem velátum nunc aspicio,

Oro fiat illud, quod tam sitio,

Ut, te reveláta cernens fácie,

Visu sim beátus tuæ glóriæ.

Amen.

(The following is usually said after  
each Stanza.)

Ave Jesu, Pastor fidélium ;

Adaúge fidem omnium in te cre-  
déntium.

Than truth's own word there is no  
truer token.

God only on the Cross lay hid from  
view ;

But here lies hid at once the man-  
hood too :

And I in both professing my belief,  
Make the same prayer as the re-  
pentant thief.

Thy wounds, as Thomas saw, I do  
not see :

Yet Thee confess my Lord and God  
to be :

Make me believe Thee ever more  
and more ;

In Thee my hope, in Thee my  
love to store.

O Thou memorial of Our Lord's  
own dying !

O living bread, to mortals life  
supplying !

Make Thou my soul henceforth on  
Thee to live ;

Ever a taste of Heavenly sweetness  
give.

O Loving Pelican ; O Jesu Lord !  
Unclean I am, but cleanse me in  
Thy blood !

Of which a single drop, for sinners  
spilt,

Can purge the entire world from all  
its guilt.

Jesu ! whom for the present veiled  
I see,

What I so thirst for, O vouchsafe  
to me ;

That I may see Thy countenance  
unfolding,

And may be blest Thy glory in  
beholding.

Amen.

Jesu, Eternal Shepherd ; hear our  
cry ;

Increase the Faith of all whose  
souls on Thee rely.

We have yet two other points to refer to in connection  
with this Holy Sacrament. 1st. *The effects of the Holy Eucharist*  
and 2nd. *Spiritual Communion.*

The effects of the Holy Eucharist are:—

1. Sanctifying grace, the *second* grace, *per se*, greater and more abundant than that which is conferred in the other Sacraments. It may *per accidens* confer the *first* grace, when a person unconscious of mortal sin, but in that state and thinking himself, contrite should receive with only attrition.

2. *Sacramental grace*, that is a distinct mode and special vigour of habitual grace calculated to nourish the soul *spiritually* according to the words of Christ: *My flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed*. Therefore, the Holy Eucharist effects *spiritually* in the soul what corporal food does for the body, namely, it sustains, increases, repairs and delights it. Hence 1., it takes away venial sins as to their guilt, not only immediately *ex opere operantis*, as it is said, by exciting us to an act of charity, or contrition; but also according to the probable opinion of most grave authors, it remits them immediately by reason of its nourishing grace or its being the food of the soul, and therefore *ex opere operato*; provided the Communicant places no obstacle in the way by retaining an affection for the venial sins; for, as corporal food restores the powers of the body, weakened by natural heat or labour, so this food restores the spiritual powers of the soul, which are daily weakened by venial sins and our evil inclinations. It is for this reason that the council of Trent calls it: The antidote whereby we are freed from daily faults and preserved from mortal sin. 2. It preserves us from mortal sins on account of the increase of charity and union with Christ, effected in the soul, through which its interior powers are strengthened; and also, inasmuch as it is a sign of the Passion of Christ, by which the demons were conquered, they tremble at it and do not attack the soul as powerfully and as much as they would otherwise wish. 3. It remits the punishment of sin, not *directly*, since the Eucharist as a Sacrament is not instituted to satisfy but to nourish; but *indirectly*, by means of the acts of charity which it excites in the soul. 4. It unites us with Christ and His members, by increasing in our souls the love of God and our neighbour. 5. It imparts spiritual sweetness and delight, inasmuch as it is *cibus delectans*, which effect is often impeded by our negligence, distractions and affections for earthly things, or in the case of some devout souls, it is impeded for their humiliation and trial. 6. It lessens the natural inclinations to sin by increasing charity, by exciting pious emotions in the heart and by giving peace and happiness to the soul, which often redounds to the body also. 7. It gives glory, inasmuch as Christ, who is the giver of glory is

contained in it as food, nourishing and strengthening the soul in good by which it can persevere until that time in which actual beatitude is given. Hence it is called by the Council of Trent "the pledge of future glory and perpetual felicity."

Here it may be asked how may the Holy Eucharist profit others besides the communicants themselves? We are so often asked to offer a Communion for a particular intention, or we promise to offer our Communion for another, that it is well to understand how our Communions may benefit others.

The Eucharist as a Sacrament does not of itself profit any, except those who receive it; for it is received as food, and food can be of no advantage to anyone except the person who takes it. Hence when you offer your Communion for another you confer nothing on him of the grace or Sacrament which you receive yourself. However, by way of congruous merit or impetration, it can profit the living, and by way of suffrage it can profit the souls in purgatory, because it is a satisfactory act. I have said as a Sacrament; because as a sacrifice it profits others than the communicants, namely, those for whom it is offered.\*

What is meant by Spiritual Communion?

Spiritual Communion which is the delight of the saints, is recommended by the Council of Trent, and according to its teaching it is: "A pious desire conceived through a lively faith, which works by love, to receive the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist when one cannot receive it in reality." It is made up of two acts, 1. A lively faith which shows us Christ truly present in the Holy Eucharist, and 2. An act of desire by which we desire to receive Christ in the Sacrament and to be united to Him with all our heart.

This Spiritual Communion can be made in any place, at any time and often in the day. The most appropriate time for it is when the Priest communicates at the H. Sacrifice of the Mass.

By a Spiritual Communion made worthily one may receive the fruit of this Sacrament, namely, grace, and that in its abundance; for as God rewards the desire of any virtue, how much more will He reward the desire of Himself? St. Teresa says, "Spiritual Communion is very useful and do not omit it." As to the *Sacramental grace* it does not give it, that is of itself, but another which corresponds to the state and devotion of the soul.

I have said, *made worthily* that is "*through a lively faith*"

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\* Ita Haine. Theol. Moralis De effectibus Eucharistiae.

† Ita Haine. Theol. Moralis de Communionē Spirituali.

*informed by charity,"* because a soul in mortal sin, as long as it does not repent, not only receives no fruit but cannot communicate spiritually without sin, for this would be to wish to associate God with Belial. A person in sin can however desire to receive this Sacrament on some future day after the sin shall have been remitted.

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS.

The Holy Eucharist is a Sacrifice as well as a Sacrament. It is called the Holy Sacrifice of the *Mass* from the Latin word *mitto*; either, because Christ is in it sent by the Father, or from the sending away or dismissing of the people at the end of Mass, or, because the priests send up their prayers to God through this Sacrifice.

It is truly and really the Sacrifice of the New Law, according to the words of the Council of Trent: *Si quis dixerit in Missa non offerri Deo verum et proprium Sacrificium, aut quod offertur non sit aliud quam Christum nobis ad manducandum dari; anathema sit.*

The Sacrifice of the Mass is *Latreuticum*, or a Sacrifice of supreme adoration offered to God in acknowledgment of his supreme dominion: it is *eucharistic* inasmuch as it is offered to God in thanksgiving for all the benefits received; it is a *propitiatory* Sacrifice, in as much as it obtains pardon for sins; and *satisfactory* in obtaining the remission of the punishment due to them. It is also *impetratory*, inasmuch as God is entreated and supplicated for graces and benefits through the merits of Christ. It is different from the Sacrifice of the Old Law, not only according to rite of offering, but, between the thing offered and the person principally offering there is an infinite distance. It is the same essentially as the Sacrifice of the Cross; but in the manner of offering accidentally different inasmuch as His precious blood was *really* shed on Calvary, but only *mystically* in the Mass. It is the same, essentially, as the Sacrifice offered by our Saviour at the Last Supper, but then Christ was mortal and now He is immortal.

It is not necessary to go more fully into the nature and explanation of this Sacrifice, for in writing for Religious, it would

be superfluous to do so, as they have so many useful manuals of instructions on the H. Eucharist, and for the most part, they themselves are called upon so frequently to prepare others for their first Communion, and to teach them how to assist at Mass, that they are well acquainted with all that need be known in regard to this divine mystery. It often happens, however, that devout souls are disquieted about the manner in which they hear Mass, and it is to direct them in this duty that our remarks in this chapter may be useful.

To this end I propose to explain 1st : The obligation of hearing Mass, and how it is satisfied.

2nd. The manner of hearing Mass devoutly.

Although in the Constitutions and Rules of most Religious Institutes daily Mass is prescribed ; and also it is very desirable that Religious should assist at Mass every day, on account of the great fruit to be derived from this Holy Sacrifice ; there is not however, any law or command of the Church, obliging the Religious to hear Mass oftener than Seculars ; but, great negligence in regard to attending the community Mass, that is offered in almost all Convents every day, would be the occasion of great spiritual loss to the soul and of bad example to the community.

Nuns, like Seculars, are obliged to hear Mass on Sundays and Holidays of obligation and it is in respect of these Masses of obligation that their doubts and difficulties arise. Some think that they have not fulfilled the precept of the Church either because they have not had the necessary *attention*, or, that they entertained distractions during the time of Mass, or, they say, that they have not had the *intention* to satisfy the obligation and they propose to hear another Mass ; or, it sometimes happens, that they arrive in the Chapel after the Mass has commenced.

To settle these difficulties it will be sufficient to explain what authors teach concerning them. We suppose now that the questions are about a Mass of obligation to be heard on a Sunday or Holiday ; for as to week-day Masses which are heard through devotion, or, in order to satisfy a point of Rule the conscience cannot be seriously compromised ; although there can be no doubt, that one might commit many faults, by assisting at this august Sacrifice with negligence or wilful distractions or without sufficient reverence.

What is the intention required to satisfy the obligation of hearing Mass ?

It is sufficient to do the act commanded, that is, to wish to

hear Mass and to hear it. It is not necessary to have the intention to satisfy the precept, that is to say, to wish to hear Mass because the Church commands it; and in order to obey this injunction one can satisfy the precept, even though she should not advert to it, or hear Mass on a day which she thinks is not a Holiday of obligation, and then if she should find out that it is, she would not be bound to hear another Mass. By virtue of the precept, one is only obliged to do what is commanded, namely, in this instance to hear Mass.

What is the attention required to satisfy the precept? It is necessary that it be a human act, that is, to be awake to the act of hearing or assisting at Mass; so that a person asleep or otherwise insensible during the whole or the principal parts of the Mass, would not satisfy the obligation. For the rest, it is not necessary to have the actual attention, but, it suffices at the commencement to have the will to pay attention to the Holy Sacrifice, and not to revoke that will. It is the opinion of most grave authors, which St. Liguori calls probable, that the *external* attention suffices to satisfy the substance of the precept of the Church; but to assist at Mass without the internal attention, that is, having voluntary distractions, is certainly an act of irreverence and of sin of some kind, at least venial sin.

During the Mass, a nun may say her Office or her penance or any other prayers of obligation; because all tend to the same end or are from the same motive of religion, and they are not therefore incompatible with each other, and she can have attention to both actions at the same time. She may, also, examine her conscience, and read spiritual books, as these need not impede the moral assistance at the Holy Sacrifice. It is asked whether a nun in an ecstasy during the time would satisfy the precept? Some say that she would not satisfy the obligation, because she has not the intention or the necessary presence; others, as Suarez, say *yes*; because the intention preceded and still lasts, and there is the necessary presence also, inasmuch as she takes part in honouring God at the time by the contemplation of divine things. This seems to be the right opinion and the one to be held in practice, especially as it is not through her own fault that a nun is wrapped in ecstasy at the time of Mass. Of course, if it were her own fault the solution would be different.

As regards the *integrity* of the Mass, is it necessary to be present during the whole time of the Holy Sacrifice?

Here we must distinguish that which one cannot omit *without sin* and that which one cannot omit *without losing Mass*. The Mass

proper, according to St. Isidore, does not commence except at the "Offertory," and the essence of the Sacrifice, according to the more probable opinion, consists in the Consecration and the Communion, or rather the Consecration with the Communion, as necessary to its *integrity*. And on this account the Church never allows the Sacrifice to be interrupted before the Communion of the priest, which is the consumption of the Holy Victim. So that, if the celebrating priest should die between the Consecration and Communion, or in any other way become disabled from proceeding to complete the Sacrifice, the rubric prescribes that another priest be called in to finish the Mass. And in this case a priest who is not fasting is allowed to go on with the sacrifice when another cannot be found. This being understood, the following conclusions are arrived at :—

1. It is only a venial sin to omit the part of the Mass which precedes the Gospel, or which follows the Communion. I need scarcely add that the omission would not be sinful if there were any just reason for it.

2. St. Liguori considers it a grave sin to omit the Consecration and the Communion, that is, the priest's Communion, as the Sacrifice consists essentially in the Consecration with the Communion or *sumption*, as an integral part.

3. It is commonly admitted that it would be a grave sin to be absent from the Consecration to the Pater Noster, as this is regarded as a considerable portion of the Canon.

4. It is not quite certain whether one who is absent from the Consecration alone, or from the Communion alone, would satisfy the precept,\* and it is certain he would not have heard Mass at all, who would be absent from both.

5. According to the greater number of authors, it would be a grave fault to miss the first part of the Mass to the end of the Gospel inclusive; this would be certainly the case if the "Offertory" were also missed.

In the last four cases above mentioned one would be obliged to hear another Mass, or at least the part which has been missed or omitted. This can be done, provided the Consecration and Communion be in one and the same Mass. The obligation would be less rigorous in the fifth case than in the three others, because it is certain, in this case, that one has heard Mass and is held culpable only for having omitted a considerable, though not an essential part of the Sacrifice. There would be no fault or sin, if

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\* St. Liguori, lib. 3 n. 10.



during the Mass a nun should have to be occupied in preparing the hosts, the candles, or other things in connection with the H. Sacrifice; but she should not be absent from the Chapel for any considerable time.

It is also held that for some particular conscientious reason a nun may omit Mass in order to go to Confession, that is, in the case where she would not have a suitable opportunity of going to Confession at another time. This would be in a case where there is a moral necessity for confessing, and by missing the opportunity offered, it would be to her a great spiritual loss. Because if a *temporal* loss or grave inconvenience would excuse one from the obligation of hearing Mass, much more should a *spiritual* loss and grave inconvenience be a sufficient excuse to exempt from this obligation. Thus, on an occasion when all the others are going to Communion a nun may omit Mass in order to get confession when she cannot go to confession beforehand, and this, not only for the spiritual advantage of her soul, but also to avoid the inconvenience that might follow, namely, the surprise of the others, and probably the unjust thoughts and suspicions of some.

As regards nuns who through some cause or other have been absent from Mass, how are they to hear another Mass? Are they obliged to go out of the Convent to do so?

In the case of an enclosed Community, the nun who could not hear Mass in the Convent would be dispensed, on that occasion, from the obligation of hearing Mass. She would sin by voluntarily exposing herself to the total or partial omission of Mass, but in the alternative one or other of the precepts, namely, that of Enclosure or of hearing Mass, the former should be observed in the particular case here supposed.

As to nuns that are not bound by the law of Enclosure, they are certainly obliged to go out to hear Mass when they miss hearing Mass in the Convent, and when they cannot have another Mass celebrated there on that day.

What are the effects of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass?

The effects of the Sacrifice of the Mass are five-fold, corresponding to the five-fold end for which it is offered. They are, 1st, *Latreuticus* or the supreme adoration of *Latria* given to God; 2, *Eucharistic*, or thanksgiving for benefits received; 3, *Impetratory*, or supplication for graces and favours, both spiritual and temporal; 4, *Propitiatory*, or the remission of sins; 5, *Satisfactory*, or the remission of the temporal punishment due to sins.

How are these effects caused? The Mass causes its effects 1. both *ex opere operato*, or by virtue of the Sacrifice itself, by which

the merits and satisfactions of Christ are applied independently of the dispositions of the minister, and *ex opere operantis*, that is, like any other good work, according to the due disposition and devotion with which it is offered. 2. As to the effects which relate immediately to God, namely, the *adoration* and the *thanksgiving*—these are caused *ex opere operato*, immediately and infallibly; but the effects that relate to us, namely, *propitiatory*, *impetratory*, and *satisfactory*, these are caused, some immediately and some mediately, some infallibly, and others not infallible. Thus the remission of sins is only effected mediately, namely, by moving God to grant the grace of repentance to the sinner, for it belongs to the Sacrament of Penance to effect immediately the remission of sins. Likewise, it effects in the souls of the just only mediately an increase of sanctifying grace, namely, by sup-  
 plicating actual graces for good works which merit the increase of grace, for to cause *per se* and immediately an increase of grace belongs to the Sacraments of the living. On the other hand, it causes actual graces immediately, that is liberation from evils, both public and private, and, generally speaking, all, even temporal goods it is ordained to obtain for us immediately, provided these conduce to our salvation. It also causes immediately the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin; and the satisfactory effect, both for the living and the dead, is infallible. All punishment is not, however, always satisfied by one sacrifice; for to the *living* is granted remission according to the manner of their dispositions; and to the *dead* according to the manner of the Divine Justice and Wisdom.

The *propitiatory* and *impetratory* effects are not caused infallibly; for the remission of sins, the augment of grace and other spiritual and temporal benefits are not obtained infallibly; because it may happen that in the soul for whom the Holy Sacrifice is offered there may be the absence of the proper dispositions and an obstacle to the graces supplicated. We have to except actual graces, as these are always in a measure granted. From which it appears that satisfaction for the dead is more certain in its effect than supplication for the living. Nevertheless, it is more expedient to have Masses said for a person during life than after death; because, above all things, care should be taken and every means used to obtain a happy death. As Dr. Moriarty says in his Allocution on the "care of the dead": "No doubt the care of the *dead* must be second in importance to the care of the *living*. While the Christian is *in via* there is question of his salvation or his damnation. The Church's action must have for

object to secure for him the *one thing necessary*. When he is in *termino*, that question is decided, and the business of the Church is to hasten his beatitude, to alleviate and abridge his sufferings, and to treat with honour his mortal remains. This is of course of much less importance than placing him while living in a state of grace, but yet it holds a large and prominent place in the ministrations of religion."

What are the fruits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and how are they distinguished in respect to those for whom it is offered?

The fruits of the Mass are its effects as applied to us; that is, the *expiatory* effects for sin; the *satisfactory* for the punishment due to sin and the *impetratory* for obtaining spiritual and temporal benefits. And in respect to the persons for whom the Mass is offered they are three.

1. The *general*, which benefits the whole Church and all its members, both living and dead, especially those who assist at Mass, and more especially those who serve, sing or in any way concur in its celebration.

2. The *special*, which goes to the person or intention for which the Mass is applied. It is called also the *middle fruit*.

3. The *most special*, which is reserved to the priest himself, and this is the case always, even when he has taken a stipend for other "intentions."

What is the value of the Sacrifice? As to *adoration* and *thanksgiving*, it is infinite in its efficiency or effect, or as it is said in *actu secundo*. Inasmuch as it is *expiatory*, *satisfactory*, and *impetratory*, it is infinite in its sufficiency, that is, in itself, or in *actu primo*, for it is founded on the infinite merits of Christ; but as to its efficiency or actual application in *actu secundo*, the fruit is finite, as is clear, from the practice of the Church and the sense or feeling of the faithful; for one and the same intention, and one and the same person, many Masses may and are often offered, and this is not only allowable, but praiseworthy and most strongly recommended.

As to the question, Whence does the limitation come? suffice it to say that according to some, it comes from the finite capacity of those for whom it is offered, so that it would benefit many as well as one if offered for many, and if all of them are well and properly disposed; it is, however, forbidden for other reasons that a priest should satisfy for many stipends by one Mass. Others say that the limitation of the fruits of the Mass comes from the will of Christ, who ordained that the Sacrifice as often as it is offered should have a certain definite and finite effect.

Having explained the obligation of hearing Mass and the fruits of this Holy Sacrifice, we wish to add some directions as to the manner of hearing Mass devoutly.

II. *The manner of hearing Mass devoutly.* There are several methods of hearing Mass devoutly; for example, to meditate during the time on the Passion of Jesus Christ, or on some Eternal Truth; or to make use of a book of devotions, or to say the Rosary, etc. All these means will help to hear Mass with fruit and occupy the soul during the time. There is, however, one means that seems to me worthy of special commendation; that explained by St. Leonard in his *Manuale Sacro*, and as I know of no other means more profitable or suitable to be used by Religious or by Seculars in hearing Mass I here give, with some abridgment, his method.

To attend to Mass with fruit we should recollect with St. Thomas that we owe God four great debts—1st, Of praise, honour, and adoration; 2nd, Satisfaction for our sins; 3rd, Thanksgiving for all the benefits and graces we have received; 4th, Supplication (which is a *duty*) for the graces we stand in need of.

We shall hear Mass well if we are mindful of our four debts, and offer the Mass to satisfy for them.

1st. *Adoration.*—To consider in this great mystery the infinite humiliation of Christ, in order to honour and adore the Most Holy Trinity. By the Mass infinite honour, praise, and adoration is given to the Most High. Greater than the honour of all the saints and angels, and all creatures together, because their adoration is finite and the Mass infinite.

2nd. *Satisfaction.*—This is a debt of justice contracted by our sins. The debt contracted by one mortal sin is infinite. Consider the number and greatness of our sins and the sins of the whole world. We could never have satisfied the justice of God or paid the debt of sin. . . Christ on the Cross, by the sacrifice of His life, satisfied for all the sins of the world, and the Sacrifice of the Mass is the same as the Sacrifice of Calvary. It offers to God infinite satisfaction and applies the satisfaction of Christ to our souls, according to our dispositions and according to the measure of the will of God.

3rd. *Thanksgiving.*—This is a debt of gratitude for all that we have received from God—body, soul, senses, powers, health, life, grace, and religion. Think of all our past graces received, especially in the Sacraments and through our religious vocation. The Holy Eucharist is a thanksgiving of infinite value.

4th. *Petition*.—We should reflect on the greatness of our wants, both temporal and spiritual, and the need we have of the divine assistance; especially we need and desire to obtain the grace of final perseverance and a happy death. Christ has merited all graces for us. In the Mass He descends from heaven once more in the flesh. He feels the same compassion for us now as always, and in the Mass He offers Himself to His heavenly Father to obtain more graces for our souls.

St. Leonard then explains his method as follows:—

“In order to pay these four debts which we have contracted towards God, let us represent to ourselves the debtor in the Gospel who owed to his master ten thousand talents, and let us make use of his expression, and say to our Divine Master: *Have patience with me a little longer and I will pay thee all*. Have patience with me, or give me time to hear Mass; for Christ in that Holy Sacrifice will pay all that my soul owes. Then, in going to hear Mass, let us divide it into four parts after this manner:—

“In the first part, which will be from the commencement of Mass to the Gospel, humble yourself with Jesus; and thinking on your own unworthiness, confess sincerely your nothingness before the Majesty of God, and say to Him with internal humility, and with external composure and devotion: ‘Ah, my God! I adore Thee and acknowledge Thee as my Lord and Master; all that I am and all that I have belong to Thee. And as Thy Supreme Majesty deserves infinite honour and adoration, and I, a poor, helpless creature, am unable to pay this debt, I offer to Thee the humiliations and honours which Christ offers to Thee upon the altar; that which Christ does I intend also to do; I humble and abase myself together with Him before Thy Majesty. I adore Thee with the same humiliations which Jesus offers to Thee, and I rejoice that He gives to Thee in this Sacrifice infinite honour and adoration.’ You may make many of these internal acts, and you need not confine yourself to the *formula* of words here used, but speak according to your own devotion.

“In the second part of the Mass, which will be from the Gospel to the elevation, you should discharge the second debt. Give a short review over your past sins and understanding the greatness of your debt to the Divine Justice on account of them, with a soul humble and contrite say to Him: ‘Behold my God this traitor, who so many times has rebelled against Thee, I hate and detest all my offences and all my most grievous sins and I offer on account of them, the same satisfaction which Jesus offers on the

**altar.** I offer to Thee all the merits of Jesus, Jesus Himself God and man, who in the quality of victim offers Himself again for me, and since Jesus has become my Mediator and my Advocate on the altar, and with His most Precious Blood implores pardon for me, I unite my prayer with the voice of that Precious Blood and implore Thy mercy for all my most grievous sins; the blood of Christ implores Thy mercy and my sorrowful heart begs and cries for mercy. Oh dear Lord if my tears move Thee not, let the pains of my Saviour move Thee; and that mercy which He obtained for the whole human race on the cross why may He not obtain it for me? If as I hope, through the merits of His Precious Blood thou wilt deign to pardon my most grievous sins I will continue to bewail them and weep for them to the end of my life.

“Repeat many such acts of contrition, that through this means, you may atone for all your past sins and make satisfaction for them through the Holy Mass.

“In the third part of the Mass, which will be from the elevation to the Communion, mindful of so many and so great graces and benefits received from God, and in exchange for them, offer to God a gift of infinite value, namely that of the body and blood of Jesus Christ; also invite all the angels and saints to thank God for you in this or some similar manner:

“Behold me O my God, enriched with so many benefits both general and particular, which Thou hast bestowed upon me and which it is Thy will to bestow upon me both in time and eternity. I know that Thy mercies towards me have been and are infinite, but I am ready to pay Thee all I can in return for them, accept then, this Divine Blood, this most Precious Body, which in gratitude I present to Thee by the hands of the priest. This offering which I make is a sufficient return for all Thy gifts, for as its value is infinite, it surpasses all other gifts and graces. I beseech the holy angels and all the blessed spirits to thank Thee, my God, and to offer to Thee not only this Mass but all the Masses that are being celebrated throughout the world, that Thy beneficent goodness may be fully recompensed for all the graces which Thou hast granted and which Thou mayest grant now and for ever.’ Amen.

“In the fourth part of the Mass which will be from the Communion to the end, be encouraged to ask graces from God, know that at that time Jesus is united with you and He also prays and supplicates for you; open your heart then to Him and ask not things of little moment but great graces as the offering which

you make to God is also great, namely, that of His Divine Son and therefore say to Him with an humble heart :

“ My dear Lord, although I acknowledge myself unworthy of Thy favours, I confess my unworthiness, and on account of my sins, I do not deserve to be heard. But how canst Thou not hear Thy only divine Son who prays for me on the altar, and offers to Thee for me His blood and His life? Hear oh my God! the prayers of this great advocate, and for His sake grant me all graces which Thou knowest to be necessary for my eternal salvation. Now I have the heart to ask of Thee a general pardon of all my sins, the grace of final perseverance in good, and I would even beg of Thee, through the prayers of my Saviour, every virtue in an heroic degree, the efficacious graces to make me a saint, the conversion of all sinners, and especially those connected with me by ties of relationship; I ask a great spirit of devotion on behalf of all my Sisters; make them all saints and grant that this Convent may be a paradise of delights for Thee and a true school of virtue for us.’ Amen.

“ Continue to ask for yourself, for the Convent, for the whole Church, and ask with confidence, and you may be sure that your prayers united with the prayers of Jesus Christ will be heard.”

If every Mass were heard in this manner, what treasures of graces would our souls now possess? What a great loss it is to the person, who whilst assisting at Mass, is distracted, looking about, or even talking, or perhaps half asleep; or at most only saying with sloth and uneasiness some few vocal prayers.

I conclude this chapter with the advice of St. Leonard :—

“ Inasmuch as you love your own soul, hear as many Masses as possible, and hear them in the manner above explained; also endeavour to have as many Masses as possible said either in your Convent, where the Sisters may assist at them, or for your intention, whenever with the permission of the Superiress, you can obtain their celebration; and when, each morning you direct your intention to God to render all the actions of the day meritorious by saying the usual ejaculation, have at the same time the intention and a great desire to assist at all the Masses which are celebrated that day throughout the whole world, offering all to God, for the four ends above referred to; remembering each day this intention and renewing this offering you may hope to receive many graces and great advantage for your soul, and finally its eternal salvation.”

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CHAPTER VII.

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ON THE OBSERVANCE OF FASTS AND FEASTS.

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THE OBSERVANCE OF FASTS.

In Religious Communities, we often find some nuns whose consciences are disturbed and anxious on account of the obligation of fasting. Sometimes they fear that they have not sufficient reason to be dispensed from the law; sometimes that they have taken more to eat at collation, than is allowed; and sometimes that the time of the meals or the interval between them is not correctly observed. Superiors also find themselves in difficulties in regard to this matter; because they cannot always have recourse to the ecclesiastical authority, and they are afraid, on the one hand, to permit any infringement of the law of fasting, and on the other, they are uneasy about the health of their subjects. Some there are who seek dispensations for very slight reasons, and others are so scrupulous and generous as never to ask for a dispensation even when the state of their health requires it. It may be well, therefore, to determine the obligations imposed by the law of fasting, and to give some general rules for the direction of nuns in this matter.

Following Father Gautrelet, in his mode of treating this subject, we may say that three things should be considered in the law of fasting. 1. Abstinence from flesh meat. 2. One meal and a collation. 3. The time of that meal.

I. *Abstinence from flesh meat.* 1. On all fasting days, according to the general law of the Church, flesh meat is forbidden. By Papal Indults granted to particular countries flesh meat is allowed on certain days of Lent. 2. On certain days things that take their origin from flesh, such as eggs and butter, are also forbidden: but these days are now very few on account of the Lenten Indults usually granted. 3. To those who are allowed the use of flesh meat on fast days, fish is not permitted at the same meal according to the *Constitution* of Benedict XIV, *non ambigimus*. 4. By a Rescript of 19th May, 1860, His Holiness, Pius IX., has granted to the faithful in England the use of lard and dripping as condiments on all fasting and abstinence days: Good Friday excepted. This Indult applies to the collation as well as to the one meal on fasting days. 5. This obligation admits of light



matter, so that to eat a small morsel of meat, say less than an ounce would not be a mortal sin.

II. *One meal.* By the law of fasting we are forbidden to take more than one meal a day and a collation. We have to speak in the first place of the *one meal*, usually called the dinner and afterwards of the collation.

They sin against this law: 1. Who on a fast day eat a notable quantity outside the time of the dinner and the collation. They would not commit a new sin each time, should they eat often, but the first time; for they can only break the fast once on the same day. But one who would break the abstinence by eating forbidden food, would sin each time, and as often as he would eat the forbidden food. Also, one who would take a small quantity often, would be guilty of a grave sin when it would amount to a grave quantity according to the proposition condemned by Alexander VII.\*

As to the quantity that would be considered grave in this matter, writers are not unanimous. It would certainly be considered by all to be grave and notable, if it should amount to what is allowed at collation (eight ounces). It would only be considered light if it did not exceed two ounces taken together, or three ounces when the refectons are taken at different times.

It is received as an axiom that liquids do not break the fast, such as wine, tea, coffee, lemonade, etc. Chocolate, milk, and other liquids that are taken more as food than drink are not allowed with the same latitude, but may be taken in a small quantity.

We have said that the law of fasting forbids us to take more than one meal, but a collation may also be taken which is not considered as a meal. The following practical rules may be given in regard to this collation.

1. As to the quantity of the food, the common opinion nowadays is that eight ounces of food is allowed, and even ten ounces may be allowed to those who require more nourishment than others. As to the quality of the food, we can lawfully use what is allowed according to the established custom of the country in which we live. Thus butter and cheese may be used at collation in some countries, and not in others. In Ireland, England, and Scotland butter is allowed at collation except on the greater fasts, known as "black" fast days. Custom has established this usage in Scotland, but in Ireland it was permitted by Papal

\* In die jejunii qui sapienter modicum quid comedit etsi notabilem quantitatem in fine comederit non frangit jejunium.

Indult (January, 1881); and in England it was granted by an Indult of the 18th March, 1880.

The collation is usually taken in the evening, but it may be taken in the forenoon for some just cause, such as going a journey, on account of business, or according to an existing custom in the place.

Besides the dinner or meal, and the collation, it is now established by custom that a small refection (about two ounces) may be taken in the morning with tea or coffee, as the case may be. This practice was approved by a response of the S. Congregation, the 21st November, 1843. Also a small morsel might be taken once in a way, for the sake of refreshment during the day, *ne potus noceat*, when taking a drink, but this, if repeated too often, would break the fast. We may therefore briefly sum up the usual manner of keeping the fast in these countries in the following items:—

1. In the morning one can take a drink of tea or coffee, &c., with a small complement of food, about two ounces.

2. The usual dinner can be taken. I need not go into the length of time allowed for dinner, for in Convents dinner is begun and finished within the time prescribed by the Rule.

3. The collation at night, when one is allowed to take about eight ounces of food.

### III. *The hour for dinner on Fasting days.*

This is said to be twelve o'clock, noon; that is, the dinner should not be taken before that hour. In some places abroad, and in some Convents which have taken the order of their daily exercises from the Mother Houses on the Continent, the dinner is taken before twelve; even at eleven in some few places, and this is justified by an established and authorised custom.

"It is a subject of discussion among Theologians whether the hour at which dinner, or the principal meal, is to be taken forms a notable part of the fasting precept, so that one would be guilty of a mortal sin who does not attend to it. The Theologians who hold the negative opinion (Layman, Elbel and others) would not condemn the taking of dinner at eleven o'clock; but others (St. Alphonsus and those who follow him) would require a justifying cause to warrant the fixing of an hour very notably earlier than noon, when dinner is usually taken in Lent."\* It would not be a sin to anticipate the time a little—about a quarter of an hour.

We have next to speak of the causes which exempt from the

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\* Irish Eccles. Record, May, 1886.

obligation of fasting. These causes are chiefly three: 1, Moral or physical inability; 2, Piety; 3, Dispensation.

Under the first head, namely, moral or physical inability, are included:—(a) The sick and infirm; (b) Those under the age of twenty-one, and those over sixty, and some think that women over fifty years of age are excused from fasting, as old age affects them sooner than men; (c) The poor, who beg from door to door, or depend on alms, who may have enough one day and too little another, are allowed to take even meat when they cannot get anything else to eat; (d) Hard labourers, namely those who have to spend a great part of the day in heavy work—even heavy spiritual work exempts as well as corporal work, for it is equally trying to the constitution, and weakens our bodies.

By reason of *Piety* all those are excused from fasting who are engaged in works of charity that are morally incompatible with fasting, such as visiting and nursing the sick, teaching in schools, priests giving missions and having to spend long hours in hearing confessions, etc.

As to dispensation from fasting the following may be stated: (a.) The Pope can dispense all the faithful, and this he can validly do without a cause. (b.) Bishops can dispense the faithful in their dioceses, not only individuals but probably the whole community; for their dispensation a cause is required—a lawful cause for individuals, but a most grave and urgent necessity is required in order that they may dispense the whole community. (c.) The parish priest can dispense in the case of his parishioners, and the Superiors of the Regular Orders and Congregations in the case of their subjects. No one, except the Pope, can grant a dispensation without a cause, and if given it would be of no avail. And in dispensations two things are included, namely, that except for weak health more than one meal a day cannot be allowed, and when leave is granted to eat meat, fish cannot be allowed at the same meal. (d.) In case of doubt whether one is able to fast or not, the opinion of the doctor or Confessor is sufficient to decide the matter, and if neither of these can be consulted the opinion of a good and prudent person is sufficient. It is now generally understood that the people are content with the dispensation of the Confessor; and Confessors, in these countries, often receive in their faculties the power of dispensing their penitents from the obligation of fasting, so that those who obtain such a dispensation may rest satisfied, and they are not to be disturbed with useless anxieties and scruples.\*

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\* See Haine's *Elementa Theologiæ*, De jejuniis Ecclesiasticis.

If the cause of exemption from the fast is certain and evident, then no dispensation is needed.

Having explained the law of the Church in regard to fasting in general, we now come to answer some questions which, in particular, affect the manner of fulfilling this obligation in Convents.

1. Are the nuns under twenty-one years of age bound to observe the fasts of Rule? Some have thought that they are to be considered bound; because they are able to bind themselves, and in fact, they do bind themselves by taking upon themselves the obligations of the Rule, and they are therefore bound to its fasts. The reason on which this opinion is founded is not a good one, for, although at profession they do take upon themselves all the obligations of their state, yet, only in so far as those obligations are intended to be binding on them; hence it must appear, from the Rule itself, that it intends to bind those under twenty-one to fast, before they are to be considered bound by it. As, for example, if a young convert receiving the faith were to enter the Church intending to bind herself to all the precepts of the Church, and amongst them in general the precept of fasting, yet she would not be bound to fast before she was twenty-one years of age, because it is not the intention of the Church to bind her. The Rule has therefore to be examined and if it contains anything by which it manifests a special intention of obliging, even the young, to the fasts they would, in this case, be bound by it; but otherwise, no; because the same reason exists for interpreting the Rule in their favour as for interpreting the law of ecclesiastical fasts.

And in the case even where the Rule would specially declare them to be bound by its laws of fasting, it is said that the Rule ought not to be too strictly enforced, and dispensations should easily be given to the Religious who are under age; because even for the good of religion, and of the Institute it is most necessary to keep up their strength at that time of life.

The same may be said of the nuns who are over sixty years of age, for the same reason as that above stated. In this matter the precept of the Rule obliges in the same manner as the ecclesiastical precept, and when the latter ceases to bind, this precept of the Rule ceases with it. Bonacina, Diana, and Sanchez exempt from fasting nuns over sixty who may have made vows to fast on certain days throughout their whole lives; because, according to them, vows do not bind beyond the measure of the ecclesiastical precept unless the intention of the person vowing determines to the contrary.

It is also to be held that nuns on the fasts of Rule, may make

use of the *Lactacinia*, eggs, butter, etc., which by Papal Indult or by custom are permitted to the secular people of the country. They are allowed in this, to follow the customs of the place, unless the Rules contain some express command or custom to the contrary. Therefore, in these countries, they may use butter at their collation.

Besides what I have said above about the custom in some convents of anticipating the hour of noon for dinner on fasting days, I find that Leo X. granted a privilege of this kind to the Franciscan minors, in which privilege the nuns of this Order participate, and the same may be made use of in convents where the custom has been introduced and established.

In concluding this subject, I wish to say that when a dispensation from the fast has to be granted to any of the Sisters the ordinary Confessor can grant it. Although he is not called *Parochus* or Parish Priest of the nuns, he exercises in the Convent and Convent Chapel all the rights and powers of a *Parochus*, and he can therefore grant dispensations both from the ecclesiastical fast and from the fast of Rule. This he cannot do without a just cause, because he has not the power to relax the law *ad libitum*, but only for some just and reasonable necessity.

The Superioress cannot, properly speaking, dispense in this matter on account of her not having jurisdiction. She can, however, declare in a particular case whether a Sister is exempt from the fast or not, and the Sisters can, with a safe conscience and as a general rule, abide by her decision, especially those who are weak and scrupulous and cannot decide for themselves, and when they cannot conveniently have access to the Confessor.

Although the Superioress cannot herself dispense from the fast, she should, nevertheless, be very watchful and attentive to the wants of the Sisters; she should take special care of those who are weak and delicate, so that their health may not be impaired by fasting. Dispensations should be easily obtained and granted in the case of the young who have not yet attained their full strength, and also in the case of Sisters who are engaged in continual work in the schools or class-rooms, in visiting and nursing the sick, in hospitals, and in their own homes, also in the other heavy duties of the Convent. It is better to grant dispensations to these than to expose their health to danger, and thereby hinder them from fulfilling their employments. If the vocation is to a life of penance only, more severity might be practised, but when it is to a life of labour as well, all their

energies and strength are required for the work which they have to do for God's glory and the salvation of souls.

Whilst treating on the subject of fasting we are naturally led to speak of the exercises of mortification in connection with it, and which are practised more or less in every Religious Community. It may, therefore, be useful here to connect with the strict obligation of fasting this virtue of mortification, which is so necessary for the attainment of Religious perfection.

Our Divine Lord has said : *He who wishes to come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.*\* This text is applied by many spiritual writers to the virtue of mortification which we are all exhorted to practise. More depends on this virtue than is thought of or fully understood. Prayer is advised and urged by every kind of argument until from reading and hearing of it, and also, by experience, we realize the impossibility of living in a religious manner without it. And yet, mortification is almost as necessary for us in our advancement in the spiritual life. St. Paul tells us : *For if you live according to the flesh you shall die : but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh you shall live.*† And the same Apostle, writing to the Galatians‡ says : *And they that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences.*

That we may show ourselves true followers of Christ by crucifying ourselves and our desires, it may be well for us often to reflect on—

1. The meaning and nature of Mortification.
2. The manner in which we ought to mortify ourselves.
3. The motives for practising this virtue.

1. *The meaning and nature of Mortification.*

Mortification means an exercise by which, through God's grace, that which is diseased in us is made sound ; whatever is lepraved or deceitful is rectified ; and whatever is obscure or hidden within our souls is made clear and manifest. It is a virtue by which whatever is bitter and difficult in the road of perfection is made sweet and easy, by which the passions of the soul and body are brought under subjection ; by which man satisfies for his sins, conquers temptation, edifies his neighbour, makes his prayers efficacious, and returns, as far as is possible in his life, to his first state of innocence and integrity.

This virtue is two-fold, namely, *exterior* and *interior* mortification or *corporal* and *spiritual*. The *exterior* mortification is that

\* St. Luke ix. 23.

† Rom. viii. 13.

‡ v. 24.

by which the body is restrained by fastings, watchings, and other austerities, and by which the five senses are subjected to the custody of the mind and right reason. It is that mortification of which St. Paul speaks, when he says: *But I chastise my body and bring it into subjection lest perhaps when I have preached to others I myself should become a cast-away.\**

The *interior* or *spiritual* mortification means, that by which the evil inclinations and affections of the mind are kept within proper bounds.

2. *The manner of practising mortification.* In speaking of the manner in which we should mortify ourselves, bodily mortification first presents itself. In this, two extremes ought to be avoided. First, that of lax, easy-going and false teachers who deny its efficacy altogether, and who think that everything ought to be done in the spirit only, just as if our bodies as well as our *spirits* were not to be reduced into subjection to the law of God; or as if the *spirit* could be mortified without mortifying the flesh. Secondly, there are those who go to the opposite extreme; who, as it were, place all power and virtue in the mortification of the body and external actions, and never think that often they are but cloaking and covering over by these *externals*, proud and vain-glorious souls, who hesitate not to judge others and condemn all outside their own world of spiritual notions and fancies. There are those again who will do *extra* things; who will limit themselves in their food and sleep and expose their health to unnecessary dangers, especially in the first years of their religious lives; and afterwards when the time comes, when they should be working for souls and for the good of the Institute, and for God, their constitutions are broken down, they are unable to perform their duties, and they have to pass the remainder of their lives in suffering and bad health.

These two extremes are to be avoided in bodily mortification. By observing the Rules of the Institute we do enough in this respect. It is a mortification to rise from bed when the bell rings, to take the discipline according to Rule, to fast, and even to pray at regular times, and at times when we have no feeling or inclination in that way. These mortifications are allowed, and they are sufficient. They are also required of us, and it would be wrong to omit them or seek dispensation from them without reason. What is appointed by the Rule ought to be observed, and these works should be performed in the true spirit of penance,

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and offered to God as such. Just as those who go on pilgrimage and perform knee stations forget not that they are doing penance, and offer up their works as such. So should it be with us in our ordinary penitential works. Let us remember that we are penitents, and offer up all our works in a penitential spirit.

*Spiritual Mortification.*—This is another name for self-denial. In this we can have full latitude, as there is no danger of excess or of any evil consequences resulting from it. The more we practise this kind of mortification the more truly do we become Religious in our manner, in our actions, and in our souls.

1. It consists first in mortifying our self-love; in making us think less of ourselves; of what we have done, of what we are doing or intend to do; and thus, it succeeds in making our minds peaceful. I believe that a mind dissatisfied and unsettled is oppressed by no vice so much as self-love.

2. It consists in mortifying our own will. By our own will I do not mean that will which is in conformity with the Divine Will; but our own will as opposed to the will of Superiors, and opposed to the will of God. This will is of such a nature as to vitiate even our good actions. Even corporal austerities performed according to it would be of no avail, as appears from what is related of the hypocritical fasts of the Jews by the prophet Isaias.\* *Why have we fasted,* they say, *and Thou hast not regarded; we have humbled our souls and Thou hast not taken notice?* The Lord answers them: *Behold in the day of your fast your own will is found and you exact all of your debtors.*

3. Lastly, it consists in mortifying our own judgment, and anyone that can do this without difficulty can be said to have the spirit of mortification. Our own judgment, which we have to mortify, is that which we think right in opposition to the judgments of others. St. Bernard, speaking on this point, says: "What pride can be greater than if one should prefer his own judgment to the universal judgment of the Congregation, as if he alone had the spirit of God?"

If we mortify ourselves in this respect we shall beware of criticising and censuring the conduct of others, and we shall not even in our own minds form rash or uncharitable judgments. If we form such judgments in the mind they are sure to break out sooner or later and manifest themselves to the injury of others; and wherever they are to be found, whether formed in the mind or expressed in words, they afford a strong proof of the absence of mortification, if not of the presence of actual sin in the soul.

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\* lviii. 2.



III. *The motives for practising this virtue.* 1. By original sin our nature became impaired and inclined towards evil. "Against this infirmity man has to contend throughout his whole life by applying to it a remedy which, though bitter and distasteful, is nevertheless, the one which God has appointed to save him from utter ruin. This is a renunciation of all those things for which his vitiated nature craves; a self-denial which withholds from his depraved tastes that which would but augment his disorder."\*

2. It is a virtue that perfects the intellect, strengthens the will, and purifies the memory. Above all, it brings peace to the soul, for nothing can disconcert or trouble a truly mortified spirit. Witness the example of the Saints and their mortifications, and you will find invariably their lives marked with peace and happiness, even in the midst of their greatest trials and austerities.

3. The example of Christ should, more than any other motive, incline us to the practice of this virtue. It is our duty to imitate our Divine Lord and Saviour in this respect. The history of His bitter Passion should remind us continually of His sorrows and sufferings. And then we should be mindful of His precept: *He who wishes to come after Me, let him take up his cross and follow Me.* There is no more certain sign of a true disciple of Christ than to carry His Cross after him. How ought not Religious to fight under the Cross which they profess to carry? And how can they suffer that the least spirit of self-love or want of mortification should mark their conduct when they consider that their Divine Saviour was crowned with thorns and nailed to the Cross, where He died in pain and anguish? Since they profess before the whole world to follow Him and to walk in His footsteps, let them especially try to do so along the road of the Cross.

*The observance of Feast Days.*

By Feast Days I here mean Sundays and holidays of obligation; those days on which christians are specially called upon to remember piously the benefits of God, and to commemorate the mysteries of our religion, or to celebrate the Festivals of the Blessed Virgin, the Apostles, the Martyrs, or other Saints.

Besides the Sundays, there are certain Feast Days to be kept holy by hearing Mass and resting from *servile* works. We have in England eight of these holidays: five of our Lord, namely,

Christmas Day, The Circumcision, The Epiphany, The Ascension, and Corpus Christi; there is one Feast of the Blessed Virgin, the Assumption; one of the Apostles, SS. Peter and Paul; and one of "All Saints."

In Ireland we have, in addition to the above, the Feast of the Annunciation and St. Patrick's Day. In America the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the B. Virgin is to be kept as a holiday of obligation according to a Decree of Pius IX., January 24th, 1868, but the Feast of SS. Peter and Paul is not so kept. In France and Belgium, by a concession of Pius VII., 9th April, 1802, the holidays are reduced to four, namely, Christmas Day, the Ascension, the Assumption of B. Virgin, and the Feast of All Saints.

These Feast Days must be kept holy just like Sundays, that is, by hearing Mass and resting from *servile* works.

When speaking of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the obligation of assisting thereat was explained, as also the manner in which this act of religion could be performed with the greatest advantage to our souls. It only remains in this place to explain a few things concerning the prohibition of *servile* works, inasmuch as some doubts occasionally arise in convents as to what works should be considered *servile* and the causes that would justify one in working on Sundays and holidays.

We may therefore ask: 1. Is it lawful for nuns to do needlework on Sundays and holidays. Many teach that it is lawful; because it is not of itself *servile* work and amongst the occupations of women we must have some species of work that is not to be regarded as *servile*. However this may be, it is now the common opinion of Theologians that needlework should be considered *servile*, and that it is not allowed on the days in question. This, I think, would apply to the heavy species of needlework such as making or mending garments, and the sewing that is looked upon as the ordinary duty of needle-women. It would seem that nuns might make "Agnus Deis," Pix-covers, and such like small ornamental things without sin. They can also decorate the altar and perform those duties that are necessary and connected with the service of God. But any such duties as can be done on weekdays ought not to be postponed until the Sunday. It is also lawful to write or transcribe on these days, because these are not numbered amongst the *servile* works but amongst the *liberal*.

It is also said by some that one might work in order to avoid idleness, but this reason, of itself, is not sufficient. There is always plenty of employment for the mind if not for the body, and *servile*

work can scarcely be considered necessary for avoiding idleness on Sundays and holidays. It is meant that the body should take rest on those days, but this does not necessarily imply that the time should be spent in idleness.

2. Can the nuns work on Feast Days to relieve some great necessity of the Convent? It is held that they can, provided that they hear Mass, avoid giving scandal, and only work to the extent that is necessary. Because as the law has what is good for its object, it does not oblige against a necessity but is subjected to it.

As to what sort of necessity is to be considered as grave enough to justify the non-observance of this law, we have to take into consideration the state of the Convent, the needs of the nuns as to food and clothing, and the things that are required in the divine service. If there were serious difficulties as regards these things, or if there was some great danger or loss to be averted, then, the law of abstaining from *servile* work would not oblige.

The causes exempting from this obligation are chiefly three: 1. *Charity towards our neighbour*; On this account it is lawful to do all that is necessary for nursing the sick, for burying the dead, or to help a poor person in need. 2. *Piety towards God*; and under this consideration it is lawful to do all that is necessary in connection with the divine service, such as preparing and decorating the Church and Altar. 3. *Necessity*; that is, our own or our neighbour's necessity. I need not enumerate all the particulars that are usually included under this. Only one other question remains to be answered, namely: What is considered grave matter in work done on these days?

To this question I shall satisfy myself by giving the general answer of Rev. A. Könnings.\*

"Many require three hours. St. Alphonsus, after enumerating several opinions, seems more to assent to that of Lacroix, which is now the more common and more probable one, that unless one works a good deal over two hours—say about two and a half hours—it would not be a mortal sin. And in the *Homo Apostolicus* St. Alphonsus says with Mazzotta that longer time would be required if there was any necessity for the work. And he adds that in forensic and judicial matters the quantity is not to be measured by the length of time but by the quality of the work."

After thus referring to the strict obligations of these days it may be well to be reminded of the spirit in which we should

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\* De tertio præcepto Ecclesiae.

celebrate those Feasts of the Church. In our convent lives we should enter into the spirit of the Church on those days and sanctify them, being mindful of the motives for which each Festival was instituted.

In Convents, especially where there are pupils and boarders, it is advisable, as far as possible, to have some extra devotion on Sundays and Festivals, so as to distinguish these days from the week days, and, therefore, it is usual to have Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament and other special devotions on these days. Besides the Feast Days of obligation there are other great Festivals which we should celebrate with special devotion, more particularly the Feasts of Our Lord's Sacred Passion; the days of Holy Week; the Feast of the S. Heart of Jesus; the Feast, of the Blessed Virgin and her month of May. These Feasts should be celebrated with great devotion in Religious Communities. It is usual to go to Communion on all those days on which a Plenary Indulgence may be gained. And when some of these solemn Festivals draw near it is customary in some Convents to prepare for them by Novenas.

During the days of the Novena we should piously commemorate the holy mysteries in connection with the time or season; we should renew within our souls the spirit of our vocation and confirm our good resolutions. These are days to be spent in great solitude with God, in order to increase in our souls the fervour of His Divine charity. No series of devotion can be better than those Novenas for recollection, to promote mutual spiritual assistance, and to preserve the true religious spirit in a Convent.

I may conclude this chapter with the words of St. Francis de Sales\* speaking of the Feast of All Saints and All Souls: "As to the great feasts which are approaching, you have nothing further to do after your office and services, save to keep your spirit in the heavenly Jerusalem, amid those glorious streets which you will ever hear resounding with God's praises. Behold that variety of Saints, and ask of them how they got there, and you will learn that the Apostles arrived thither chiefly by love; the Martyrs by constancy; the Doctors by meditation; the Confessors by mortification; the Virgins by purity of heart, and all in general by humility. On the day of the Departed you will enter into Purgatory, and will see those souls full of hope, who will exhort you to advance in piety all you can, in order that at your departure you may be the less kept back from going to heaven."

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\* Letters to Religious, Bk. VI. Letter 28.



## PART IV.

### THE ELECTION OF SUPERIORS AND THE DUTIES OF THE SUPERIOR AND OTHER OFFICIALS IN THE COMMUNITY.

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#### CHAPTER I.

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##### THE ELECTION OF SUPERIORS.

The Superiors have to be elected according to the prescriptions of the Rule either in Chapter or by the Community. In either case, it is the first duty of all to pray that God may direct the Capitular Sisters in the choice of Superiors. And, when the election is over, to receive as one sent from God the Superior who is placed over them. Great is the importance of these elections: for, on them in great measure depends the state of a Religious Community. The influence of a Superior is very great either for good or evil. This is evident to reason, and known by experience. Hence the first duty of the Religious, when the election of the Superiors are about to take place, is prayer. The interest the nuns have in their community, the charity that should guide all their actions, and their own spiritual and temporal welfare places upon the electors and all the other members of the Community the duty of praying on these occasions; and for this reason, public prayers are offered beforehand in all Religious Communities that God may send them good and worthy Superiors.

Those who are to vote should understand that they are bound in conscience to choose the person whom they judge the most capable of fulfilling worthily the important duties of Superior, and that they become guilty of a grievous sin, if through human consideration, such as ambition, self-love, or any other motive of this kind, they give their vote to one who is incapable of performing the duties, and is unworthy of the office.

They should have in view only the glory of God and the

interests of religion, they should endeavour to form a just idea of the qualities which, under the circumstances, a Superior should possess, and try to elect the nun who possesses these qualities. They should put aside all prejudice, all passion and all irregular affection and be guided only by the light of reason and faith. They should guard particularly against the natural inclination to elect those who are allied to them by friendship or relationship, but at the same time, affection should not be used to their prejudice or to the prejudice of the Community.

The Rules of each Institute prescribe certain things as to the age, the time in Religion, re-election, etc. All these things have the force of law and should be faithfully observed. As to the manner of proceeding in the elections, we have to consider the following points.

1. The electors. In the case of a nun being sick, two of the Sisters deputed should receive her vote in writing or in words.

2. The number of votes to decide the elections. When it is said that a majority of the votes are required to secure an election, this is not to be understood to mean the one who has the most votes, but only of the one who has the majority or more than the half of all the votes. Thus if ten Sisters are voting, six votes would be required to secure an election.

3. The Religious should be free in giving their votes and in no way forced or unduly influenced.

4. A Religious must not revoke a vote once given in the same scrutiny.\*

5. The elections should be confirmed in the same place in which they are made, when there is no obstacle in the way.

6. The billets should be burned to avoid the discovery of the person for whom any Sister votes.

7. No one can vote for herself. This would invalidate her election even if she had a majority otherwise, without counting her own vote. Two things however, should be carefully attended to.

*a.* The obligation already mentioned, by which a Sister is bound under guilt of sin to give her vote to the person whom, before God, she considers the proper person for the office.

*b.* All are obliged to keep the secret of the suffrage, and this is also under pain of sin. Very grave inconveniences might follow if this were not kept, and it would be wrong to endeavour to find this out by any means either direct or indirect.

In regard to the first obligation, we may ask how we are to

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\* St. Lig. iv. 5, 9.

judge whether a person is worthy or capable or not. In forming a judgment on this point, let us remember that it is not said that we are obliged to vote for the holiest, or for the cleverest, or for the most ancient in the Community. On this point we have to take everything into consideration; the gifts both natural and supernatural of those that are eligible; the office whether that of Mistress of Novices, or Rev. Mother; the particular House or Convent and all the other circumstances.

Then as in the matter of vocations either to Religion or to the Priesthood, it is often easier to decide when a vocation is absent than when it is present, so in regard to the fitness for superiority or office, it is often easier to decide as to the unworthy and incapable rather than the worthy and capable. The following considerations may help us to form a judgment on this serious matter of conscience.

1. Some are unworthy or unfit by reason of bodily ailments. That is, those who are too weak and sickly, so as to be unable to keep the Rule and attend to the regular observance. The first duty of a Superior is to give good example in this respect and to go before all her subjects in the faithful observance of the Rule. How can a sickly nun who is weak in constitution do this? Why oppress her still more with the cares of office, and perhaps in doing this shorten her life? When the Superior is unable to attend to the observance, great neglect of the regular discipline of the Convent is often the result. Both the Community and its members are neglected, and they are as sheep without a shepherd.

It is stated in Canon Law that a nun who is blind or deaf or dumb cannot be elected Superior. Besides the various decisions given at different times, this is a matter also that is evident to reason. These defects would prevent the proper discharge of her duties. She cannot watch over the nuns if she is blind; and she cannot hear their necessities or requests or complaints if she is deaf; and if she is dumb she cannot give either admonitions or corrections. Besides the nuns are bound to elect the most worthy, and it is scarcely credible that, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, a blind, or deaf, or dumb nun is to be preferred to all others in the community.

2. Some are unworthy and incapable by defect in mind or soul. That is, those who are wanting in sound judgment and prudence. In regard to this, two things go to make good Superiors. One, which is, as it were the foundation, the good disposition of the subject herself, and the other which is the complement of this, namely, experience.



The natural disposition should be good and quiet. There should be good understanding and a sound judgment. Experience is also required, if not actual experience, at least a will to acquire it and to learn. All Superiors have to begin some time or other. A prudent judgment supplies very often for the want of actual experience, because even from errors and blunders it will learn profitable lessons, and it is often better to let young Superiors learn in this way, than by undue interference on the part of the experienced hands, to hamper and make difficulties in the way of their government. No two individuals have precisely the same way of doing a thing, and no two Superiors have the same way of governing or managing their Convents and Communities. Let not the experienced be under the impression that theirs is the only way. Provided the Rules are observed and the end attained according to the Spirit of the Institute, all will succeed well.

As to the fundamental disposition which should characterise a Superior, amongst other virtues we should look especially for the virtue of prudence.

Prudence is a certain disposition of soul which moves us to use practical means for the attainment of the end in view. It is of it our Lord speaks in St. Matthew \* when he says: *Who thinkest thou is a faithful and wise servant whom his Lord hath appointed over his family, to give them meat in season.* And in the Book of Proverbs † it is said. *A leader wanting in prudence oppresses many through persecution (calumniis).* And Our Lord's admonition to his Apostles is: *Be ye prudent as Serpents,* ‡ that is, preserving the head or charity above all things and seeing that it is not injured.

St. Bernard calls prudence the Abbess of the other virtues, for none of them do well except under her direction. St. Thomas says that it belongs to prudence to take counsel wisely, to judge and to order those things that lead to the end desired; and that it is a virtue that has for its object not only the private good of one individual, but the common good of the multitude.

St. Benedict in instructing his abbots tells them—in corrections to act prudently and nothing more—in commands to be circumspect and considerate, whether they be according to God or according to the world—in works to use discernment and moderation, remembering the words of holy Jacob: *If I make my flock labour more in walking they will all die in one day.*

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\* 24, 45.

† 28, 16.

‡ Matthew x.

If prudence guides us, nearly all our works will succeed, and if any fail we will not have to reproach ourselves with temerity or indiscretion; and, on the contrary, all is lost by imprudence and our own salvation imperilled. As to the kind of prudence required in a Superior, St. Thomas teaches that by prudence in the ordinary sense man guides himself, and by political prudence he directs the common good. He says, also, that there is a *governing* prudence which directs a kingdom or city. An economical prudence which directs a family. A legislative prudence which enables lawgivers to make their statutes, and a directive prudence which guides the keeping of the laws. All of these are to be found more or less in religious government. The Superior has not only to guide herself, but her community and her subjects, that is, the religious family in attaining the end of their state and profession. Founders require legislative prudence to make the laws, but Superiors only need the prudence required to keep them and to enable others to keep them.

From all this we may understand that the prudence required in Religious Superiors is something more than natural prudence. There should be natural prudence of course, because we should not expect God to work miracles by converting into a good Superior one who is wanting in common sense and wisdom. Some species of supernatural prudence is to be desired—that prudence which surpasses the natural powers and rests more on faith and supernatural motives. Such a prudence enables a Superior to withstand present evils, to guard against future ones, not to manifest what is hidden—to pass over many things in silence, not to offend by word—not to be an acceptor of persons—not to listen to those who give praise and flattery—to overlook and bear with natural defects—to correct moral ones—not to cross, but to accommodate herself to the good talents and gifts of her subjects that she may employ them all to the best advantage.

Thus by prudent management—

The talented and qualified will be employed in teaching.

The pious and holy in praying.

The strong in manual labour and the heavy duties.

The weak in the lighter employments. Thus all will be cordially united in holy charity.

Contrast the difference between the imprudent and the prudent Superior.

The imprudent Superior is one of little mind, ignorant of many things, and thinks she knows everything. She is proud of her own judgment and foresight, etc. She attempts to become

a great reformer. She criticises the conduct and actions of other Superiors, especially her predecessors. She is anxious for office, and desires to have and to hold it. There is no greater cross to a Convent or Community than the rule and government of an imprudent and vain Superior.

The prudent Superior, on the other hand, knows much and says little. She is tolerant of the faults of others. She takes advice and can be guided by it. She will bear patiently with what she is unable to remedy. She will accommodate herself to the weak. She will restrict superfluous recreations to her Community, and grant what is necessary and useful. She will be a comfort and help in every way to the Sisters under her authority.

Let Superiors consider these qualities of prudence, and endeavour to possess them by reflecting on their actions; by the memory of the past; by the advice of seniors; and by prayers to the Father of light.

There is one other disqualification or defect that I wish to make passing mention of. It is an impediment to ordination in a sense not the same as I give to it here, but the expression seems applicable, namely, *ex defectu lenitatis*; *by defect of mildness or gentleness*. That is, through their want of mildness or kindness some may be considered unfit for the office of Superior in a Convent. The irascible, the bad-tempered, the cross-grained or such like, are not in any sense representatives of the meek Lamb of God, who amongst all His admonitions laid special stress on one as His own distinctive characteristic, when he said: *Learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you will find rest to your souls*.

The second serious obligation that binds the nuns electing in Chapter or otherwise, is that of secrecy.—Secrecy as to what is said and as to the suffrages that are given.

Secrets are known as either *natural*, *promised*, or *confided*. All are binding in conscience.

A *natural* secret is that which we cannot reveal without injury to another. This is binding by the natural law, except under certain conditions, as when the good of the Congregation or Community is involved, then, this is to be preferred to the private good of an individual.

A *promise to keep a secret* is also binding, as all promises made and received are; by reason of a species of contract, entered into by the promise.

A *confided secret* is one that is entrusted to us by reason of our office. Such as those entrusted to magistrates, doctors,

solicitors, etc., in civil matters by reason of their official position ; and in spiritual matters such as are entrusted to Superiors, Confessors, etc., in their official capacity.

Now, at the time of Chapter and elections it happens that we are asked to give our opinion about others. To what extent are we justified in doing so? This is to be done only to the extent of mentioning occult faults in so far that they are of such a nature as to disqualify a Religious for office, or are an argument to show that in office she would do harm to herself and to the Community. Of such occult faults we can speak and manifest them under the circumstances and conditions here supposed. But of personal faults, that are occult and that can in no way affect good government or interfere with the spiritual welfare of the Religious Community, we are not justified in speaking or in making them known.

Then again, past faults, if amended and repented of, should not be brought up in argument against a Religious on these occasions. The grace of God can, as we know, work a wonderful change in the soul in a very short time, even in a day, in an hour, or in a moment. We cannot, therefore, always justly argue that if a Religious fail once she will always fail. Some of the best Religious and the greatest Saints in the Church have been penitent sinners. Religious, as a rule, are the first to see their own faults and the first to weep over them with sorrow of heart, and when we have evidence of a radical conversion, then we have no right to bring up past faults and sins against them, or use them in any way as arguments to their discredit and detriment.

So much as to what may be manifested. As to keeping secret what we hear : this is a most sacred duty binding us both by the divine and natural law.

What is said and done in capitular assemblies cannot therefore be revealed outside. Grave consequences might follow, and great mischief might be done by revealing even the least thing. They are secrets confided to us in our official capacity as Capitulars. We promise to keep them secret either by explicit or implicit engagement, and we cannot therefore reveal them without sin.

Let these few remarks suffice to direct the Sisters in the important duty of electing Superiors. In that duty in which, above all others, they should keep their minds free from human respect. Having in view only the good of the Sisters, the good of the Institute and the holy will of God.

## CHAPTER II.

### ON THE OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES OF THE SUPERIOR.

By the Superior I here mean the Mother Abbess, the Prioress, or Rev. Mother, as the case may be.

In regard to their duties, the first question to be explained is their obligation to correct the transgressions of Rule.

It might appear to some that the Superior is not strictly obliged, under grievous sin, to correct small transgressions and faults, inasmuch as the obligation of correcting these small faults in others does not seem to be greater than the obligation of correcting one's own faults and sins; and as a Superior is not obliged under grievous sin to correct her own venial transgressions against Rule, etc., so it would follow, that she is not obliged under such a strict obligation to correct the transgressions of others.

St. Liguori, however, teaches it as the common opinion that in the case where the defects are many, and of such a nature as to relax the regular discipline, such as breaking silence, the fasts of Rule, etc., the Superior might sin grievously by neglecting to correct even the light or venial transgressions of her subjects. Because, even though they do not sin in a grave matter, the Superior by neglecting to impede when she can, the relaxation of observance, fails in a grave matter. She need not, however, be continually correcting her subjects, and for every trifling thing. And it is sometimes even expedient to overlook defects if they do not occasion scandal, or if she foresees that correction will do more harm than good. It is always advisable to choose an opportune time for correction.\* It is also said that she may reproach her subjects when they deserve to be severely spoken to, but this should never be done in anger, or in the presence of Seculars or the Novices. The Superior is also bound to inquire into the occult transgressions of the nuns that she may correct them. Because if she did not do this, the careless Sisters might transgress the Rule with impunity, as they could easily avoid open transgressions in the presence of the Superior; and, therefore, through occult violations and neglect of Rule, grave injury might be done to the regular observance.

Although this is the obligation of the Superior, she should, however, moderate her vigilance and inquiries according to the

dictates of prudence. She should not be too solicitous in this matter, and her inquisition should not be inopportune; for excess of vigilance is not only useless in a Community, but it becomes troublesome and hateful to good Religious, and is calculated to cause annoyance, vexations, and detractions.

Amongst the particular faults to be corrected is that of detraction. A Superior is obliged to prevent a Sister detracting another. If she neglect doing so, she not only sins by not preventing an injury to her neighbour, but she fails in her office as Superior; for to neglect this when she can apply a remedy is nothing less than to encourage detraction. And she would be bound to make amends for the injury done to the reputation of another, or to compel the detractor to make reparation, just as she would be bound to make restitution for ill-gotten goods in the case of theft.

In the next place, it has to be understood that an Abbess or Rev. Mother is incapable of spiritual power according to the teaching of St. Thomas.\* And some grave authors hold that she is incapable even of delegated spiritual jurisdiction. As she is incapable of Orders, she cannot have, even by delegation, the power of Orders; so in like manner, as she is incapable of jurisdiction, she cannot have the power of spiritual jurisdiction even by delegation. Hence, by reason of the want of spiritual power, she cannot, as a sign of that power, bless in a public place, and she can in no sense bless either water, vestments, rosaries, crosses, or any other thing in the rite or form prescribed by the Church. The nuns she can bless in the same way that parents bless their children. She cannot teach or preach publicly in the Church, as this is by divine precept prohibited to women.† Neither can she expound the Gospel or comment on it in discourse, or instruct the nuns in cases of conscience, and it would be sinful for her to attempt or to assume to herself these duties.

She may, however, give exhortations to the nuns, but avoid quoting Scripture lest her exhortations should become sermons and she become guilty of preaching.

Then she cannot dispense her subjects from fasting and other laws of the Church. This would be an act of spiritual jurisdiction which she has not got. This requires a slight modification, for, although she cannot dispense in an authoritative manner, she can do so in a kind of ministerial manner, by commission or appointment of the Bishop or Prelate; for, in such

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\* In 4 D. Q. 1, Art. 1.

† 1 Tim. c. ii.

a case, the Prelate himself dispenses and she only executes the dispensation. She can also declare in particular cases that a nun is not bound by the precept of fasting or other precepts. S. Liguori says that she can dispense in fasts, Office, etc., according to the privileges conceded by the Prelates of the Order; because, although she cannot of herself dispense by reason of the want of spiritual power, she can, by commission as already explained, which commission each Superior of a Convent is supposed to obtain at her election. The nuns may therefore, as a general rule, act with a safe conscience in accordance with any dispensations they may receive from the Abbess or Rev. Mother. In regard to the private vows of her subjects, it is certain that the Rev. Mother cannot dispense from them or commute them, as this belongs to the spiritual power of the Bishop or Prelate. She may, however, by reason of the dominative power which she possesses over her subjects, as parents over their children, annul any vows of a supererogatory kind, or even any private vows concerning the Rule. And this power extends even to the vow of passing to stricter Religious Institutes.

It is also more probable that she can annul a vow made with her consent, but for a just cause. To do so without a cause would be a sin, but not more than a venial sin. The vows of Novices cannot be annulled by the Rev. Mother or Mistress, but their obligation may be suspended if it should interfere with the novitiate life. But if the vows were taken when the Novice was still under the control of her parents the Rev. Mother can annul them inasmuch as she succeeds to the same parental authority over the Novices.

As to the arrangement of the several offices in the Community such as that of portress, sacristan, &c., it may be remarked, that the Superior cannot appoint a Sister to a function or office dangerous to her soul or in which she would be exposed to the danger of sin. And she would be obliged to remove the Sister from such an employment or office as soon as she is made aware of the danger. This is not only a duty of charity but of justice. She should not, however, on a mere suspicion of a fault remove a Sister from her office or employment, as this would confirm others in the belief of her guilt and an act of injustice, affecting the character of the Sister, would be done. This is to be understood when there would be danger of defaming a Sister before others. When there is no danger of defamation, or of acting on suspicion of a fault on the part of the Sister, the Superior is free to change the offices of the Sisters according as she may think fit, and it is

sometimes very beneficial for the Sisters themselves to have their offices changed. The Rev. Mother has the administration of the temporal goods of the convent. And in the administration she has to be guided by the constitutions and statutes of her State and of her Institute.

By reason of this administrative power she can grant to her subjects all permissions for giving and receiving, according to the Rules and the custom of the Institute. It is her duty to administer wisely all the temporal goods of the Community. She can make use of the aid of her subordinates in these temporal matters, but she ought not to neglect the care of this administration herself or throw its burthen and responsibility on others. And she should remember that the goods of the Convent are not hers, and that she cannot dispose of them at will. She should regard and watch over them as the patrimony of the poor, and as things belonging to the household of the Lord. She should also procure employment, work, etc., in connection with schools, pupils, sewing, etc., in accordance with the spirit of the Institute. These duties should be performed according to that same spirit. The end of their vocation should be remembered by the nuns in all these duties, and no employment contrary to the spirit of that vocation should be undertaken.

In the administration of the Convent, the Rev. Mother can expend all that is required for the convenience, the decency, and honour of her Community, provided, however, she does not exceed the means of the Convent, or the limits of Religious poverty. As on her devolves the administration of the goods of the Convent, and as she is the representative of the Community, it becomes her duty to act, to buy and sell and manage things in a manner becoming the Community, and according to its prudent judgment. Wherefore she can give out of the superfluous goods, alms to the poor, she can help poor relatives, especially parents, and contribute to other charitable objects, and have Masses said, provided there is no prohibition of Rule or of the higher Superiors. Her acting in this way is quite in accordance with the spirit of Religious poverty, and she need have no scruple on the point.

She cannot however, expend the money of the Convent in pious works, in adorning the Chapel or in building new wings, etc., if the Convent is poor and the nuns have to suffer by being deprived of necessities and what is allowed them by Rule on account of these extra expenses; and the Rev. Mother in all her administration, is like the others, bound by her vow of poverty.



As to the amount which Convents can spend in extraordinary expenses without the Episcopal or Apostolical permission, we have to consult the statutes of the Institute or Convent and act according to them.

In the distribution of the goods of the Convent to the Religious themselves, the Superior should always act with impartiality and not allow herself to be influenced by respect of persons. She cannot appropriate, for her own use, the best cell or anything of superior quality in the Community or grant their use to any special Sister in the Community. All these things should be regulated by the merits and necessities of the Sisters. There is no portion of the goods of a Convent specially assigned to the Superior more than to the others, and she should avoid employing either Lay-Sisters or other Sisters as servants to wait upon her, as she has no right or power to employ the Sisters for her own particular benefit but for the common good. Superiors are obliged to supply the wants of the Religious in their food, clothing, dwelling, remedies, etc. This they should do generously and avoid with great care too much parsimony, a fault likely to give pain and cause much trouble and annoyance to their subjects. St. Bernard says: "Where there is not abundance there is not observance." And even though the Convent should get into debt the wants of the Religious should be supplied; the debt should not be in any sense extravagant or unjust, and I take it, that all Convents are solvent through one means or another, if not at the present moment, they can always have a prospect of meeting all their wants and paying any debts that might through necessity be incurred at a particular time and on account of particular and exceptional needs.

It is unnecessary to add that the Convent is bound to take great care of the sick Sisters. The Superior should obtain all necessary medical advice and remedies, according to the requirements of the sick. Religion is not obliged to have recourse to extraordinary and very expensive remedies, such as the most eminent physicians, etc. This, their poverty does not demand, and the Religious have no right to expect these extraordinary means. It is, however, better that the Superior should exceed that which is necessary, rather than fail in anything which may be required for the sick and infirm.

Furthermore, in the administration of the Convent, it is sometimes necessary to enter into contracts, and it is well to know what contracts a Superior can make without the consent of the Chapter, and to what contracts the Convent would be bound.—

In contracts of small matters, in regard to food, clothing and household expenditure, no consent of the Chapter or of the Convent is required; as it would be unreasonable to obtain such a consent each time something might have to be bought. But, in contracts of a grave nature involving some new outlay or heavy expenditure, the consent of the Chapter should be obtained. The Chapter should also be convoked and consulted in all matters in which it has a voice, and a Superior would sin in acting in those matters independently and without its consent.

The Convent is bound by contracts entered into by the Superior with the consent of the Chapter, and it is responsible for debts contracted in the name of the Convent, and expended for the good of the Convent. But the Convent is not bound to pay the debts of individual Religious contracted without the permission of the Superior. If the debts were contracted before profession and the Convent had come into possession of the goods and fortune of the Religious, it would in this case, be obliged to pay just debts of the kind. Neither is the Convent bound by a contract entered into by one of its members without the permission of the Superior, especially if it be not to the advantage of the Convent. But in case of its being advantageous the Convent may ratify the agreement.

Sometimes the parents of the Religious are in need and then it is asked whether the Convent is bound to help them? If the grave necessity of parents preceded the profession and the Convent did not wish to lose a good subject, but rather to take care of her parents, then it would be bound to do so. But if the necessity of parents arises after profession, then the Institute is not bound to help them, provided it consents to let the Religious go out to support her parents. In the first case, it is true that the parents have a right to be supported in their need by the labour and industry of their child, and the Convent in admitting her to profession has, at least tacitly, agreed to supply the parents' needs in her place. In the second case the Institute can admit to profession those whose parents at the time are not in need, and it does not thereby, bind itself to any obligation towards the parents. It can, however, permit the Religious to go to assist her parents, but even this it is not obliged to do according to Suarez, if the Religious is necessary or very useful in the community.

Although not bound to help the parents of the Religious in this second case the Convent and Superiors can do so; and this is far more in accordance with the spirit of religion, than to place a nun under the necessity of going to live in the world, even for a time for the purpose of supporting her parents.

I wish to conclude this chapter by referring to two other important duties that deserve special attention.

1. A Religious Institute is bound by charity, piety, gratitude and justice to offer the usual suffrages of the Church for its deceased members. *Charity* which obliges us to pray for all men and to intercede in behalf of all the suffering souls in Purgatory, would seem to oblige us still more to pray for those who were during life so intimately united with us in the holy bonds of religion. *Piety*; a Religious is like a child in a family towards whom the Superiors should act as a parent to a child whether living or dead. *Gratitude*; for the deceased Religious has rendered towards her companions and Superiors many offices of charity during life, and has herself so often prayed for departed Sisters who have gone before her into eternity. *Justice*; according to the contract entered into between the Convent and the nun by which the nun acquires, in some way, the right, at least, to be prayed for; otherwise, after death she would be worse off than a secular, because after she has consecrated herself to God in religion she has no longer any claim on the world or the relatives she left in it.

2. Lastly; the first and most essential duty of a Superior is to pray often and fervently for the Religious committed to her care. It would not be too much to recommend her to take each day some little time to reflect seriously on all that concerns her subjects, to consider their spiritual and temporal wants—what may be to their advantage or to their injury; nothing gains their hearts more efficaciously than this attention of the Superior to help the Sisters in their wants and difficulties, and even to anticipate their requests.

The Superior who acts in this way will have the happiness of being blessed and beloved by her Religious Community as well as by her Divine Spouse.\*

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### CHAPTER III.

#### THE SUBORDINATE OFFICIALS IN A CONVENT.

After the Superior the other officials in a Convent of whose duties and obligations I wish to speak are the following:—

##### 1. The Assistant and Discreets.

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\* See Gautrelet S. J. *Traite, De L'Etat Religieux* Cajetan de Alexandria, *Conf. Mon.* and St. Liguori *De Statu Religioso*.

2. The Mistress of Novices.
3. The Bursar.
4. The Sacristan.
5. The Infirmarian.

These assist the Superior and share with her the responsibilities of office. I shall, therefore, speak of their duties, and I think it well to divide them into different sections.

#### SECTION I.

##### *The Assistant and Discreets.*

The Assistant is, as it were, the coadjutrix of the Superior, and she has no power or jurisdiction except what the Superior gives her; she cannot therefore give permission to the nuns to receive or to dispose of anything, for she does not possess by reason of her office even the domestic or what is called the economic power unless this be specially delegated to her by the Superior; but if it happens that the Superior should die or be absent or very unwell, then the Assistant can act in her place and exercise all her powers. Otherwise, the Convent would be without a head for the time being, which would not be according to right order.

The Assistant cannot command the nuns by virtue of holy obedience, because she is not really in the capacity of a Superior to whom the vow of obedience is made. The nuns, however, ought to obey her commands by reason of the domestic or civil power which belongs to her as a Superior in the Convent, though only subordinate, and her authority ought to be respected and obeyed when not at variance with the orders or will of a higher Superior.

Both the Assistant and the Discreets are bound to be present when called by the Superior to consult and decide on any matter that concerns the good government of the Convent. The reason of this is, because, when elected or appointed to their offices they took upon themselves the obligation of promoting the common good of the Community, and therefore, whenever there is anything to be done for the good of the Community, they should be present to promote it. And although an individual can renounce what is in her own favour, she cannot do this when the good of others, and of the Community is involved in it, hence neither the Assistant or Discreets should absent themselves, without a just cause, from those conferences and meetings which are held for the utility and well-being of the Convent.

On these and other occasions, if what the Superior proposes to do, is unwise and evidently opposed to the good of the Convent,

they would sin by remaining silent; because they form a corporate or collegiate body, and they cannot, therefore, remain silent when the good of the Convent requires them to speak. Nor is it sufficient excuse to say, that the Superior or the majority of the Council will decide the question, and it is useless to oppose them, or to try to change their opinion; for one should hope that truth when spoken might prevail. If it is doubtful whether the thing proposed would be for the utility or good of the Convent, or not, a Sister can give up her own opinion and agree with the opinion of the majority.

In matters that are of great importance to the common good of the Convent, they cannot remain silent even if they foresee that their opposition will grieve the Superior or cause her to be displeased with them. *Scandalum potius permittendum est quam veritas deserenda.* Let them, however, use every means in their power to show their opposition in mildness and charity, and avoid, as far as possible, giving offence by their manner or words.

If they foresee and know that their opposition will only irritate the Superior and confirm her in her own opinion, they may as well keep silence; because even fraternal correction may be omitted when one foresees that it would do more harm than good. I think that the contrary opinion ought to be held and acted upon in this matter. Correction is two-fold, one out of charity, and to be exercised only when amendment is likely to be gained; the other out of justice, which should not be omitted even if there be no hope of amendment, as the public good requires it. And as, in this case, the advice of the Assistant and Discreets is regarded as an act of justice, it should not be omitted even though no good comes of giving it.\* But if they foresee that the public good would be injured by their speaking, they can and ought to remain silent. Their silence in this case does no injury to the Community, but is for the purpose of averting an evil. Let them be careful never to neglect their duty in this respect through vain suspicions or rash judgments. Suarez and Egidius remind Assistants and other lesser Superiors that they are bound to watch over the regular observance and make known according to charity and prudence the transgressions of the Rule to the Superior.

## SECTION II.

### *The Mistress of Novices.*

The manner of electing the Mistress of Novices, her term of

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\* Ita Rodriguez de Rel. 12 qu. 45 Art. 1.

office, and the age required for this office are prescribed by the Rules of each Institute. In some she is nominated by the Rev. Mother, in others she is elected in Chapter. In some the term of her office is for one year, in others three years; and in others as long as she is able to discharge the duties of her office. In all cases she ought to be a person of mature years, and a Decree of Clement VIII. of the 19th of May, 1603, enacted that she should have completed her thirty-fifth year.

In order to fulfil her office in a worthy manner the Mistress of Novices is: 1. bound to test the novices as to their constancy in their vocation, their capacity in spiritual exercises and also in bodily exercises of labour, etc., according to their state either of Choir or Lay-Sister; to instruct them in their religious duties, and by careful admonitions so direct and train them in the spiritual life that they may become true followers of Christ.

2. She is bound to instruct them in those things that regard, at least, the substance of the Rule, that is, the general and special signification of each vow, its obligations, and the precepts of the Rule. For, according to St. Thomas, novices cannot be admitted to profession unless they know the Rule they have to profess as everyone is bound to learn and to know the duties and obligations of their state of life. Hence, novices who intend to profess the State of Religion are bound to know the Rule before making their profession and it is the special duty of the Mistress of Novices to instruct them in its spirit and its obligations.

3. She should also exercise the novices in prayer and meditation, as this is the remedy for all spiritual maladies; in spiritual reading, that they may learn what to do and what to avoid; in frequenting the Sacraments that they may acquire greater purity of soul; in fasts, vigils, disciplines and mortifications as prescribed by the Rule. They should not be allowed conversation with seculars except for some just cause, and even as regards relatives, their visits should not be too frequent, that the minds of the novices may not be distracted by the hearing of those things which they have left after them in the world.

There is a question as to whether the Mistress should rule the novices with mildness or with rigour.

Rodriguez answers, with rigour rather than mildness, according to the advice of the Wise Man. *Withhold not correction from a child; for if thou strike him with the rod, he shall not die.\**

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\* Proverbs xxiii. 13.

Let the Mistress in this matter be very careful, lest by too much severity she may cause any of the novices to get disheartened and disgusted with the Religious Life and return to the Secular state.

I agree that rigour is preferable to over-indulgence, but neither rigour nor indulgence should be used to excess. Mildness and gentleness will do more good and secure the happiness of the novices far better than severity. It is the peculiarity of some women who are not virtuous or large-minded to take even delight in persecuting others in a small way, especially those who may be under their power, and even Religion does not always eradicate this tendency.

In admitting novices to profession great discretion and much prudence is needed. Should the Mistress doubt as to the novice's fitness, she should explain to the Superior and the Chapter the habits and qualities of the novice, and also the defects, on account of which, she doubts whether the novice ought to be admitted or not. She may also consult the Confessor or some other prudent person and be guided by the advice she receives.

Here it may be noticed that defects and faults, if only temporary and corporal, and which do not cause any notable deformity, and which would not impede the keeping of the Rule, are not sufficient cause for sending away a novice; because, on account of such impediments, she is not to be considered disqualified for the Religious life.

As to spiritual imperfections, greater prudence is required in dealing with them, for human weakness is to be charitably borne with, and it is very difficult to eradicate all vices in a short time. Besides, it is easier to be in fault by excluding than by admitting a novice. The exclusion should not be without some grave cause, but a novice can be lawfully admitted if she is able to keep the regular observance, and to be in some way useful in Religion. A Mistress cannot conceal an impediment which, according to the Statutes of Religion, would render the novice's profession invalid. This would be to the injury of the Convent, and the private good of the novice is not to be preferred to the common good of the Convent and of Religion. She would sin by hiding such an impediment, and be accountable for the consequences of an invalid profession. If, however, the impediment is entirely occult, and of such a nature as not to invalidate the profession, or to be in any way injurious to the Convent, she can and ought to keep it secret.

The negligence of the Mistress during the Novitiate in

proving or testing the novices in their vocation and in their Religious life should not impede their profession at the end of the Novitiate term—because *actual probation* does not belong essentially to the Novitiate, but it is sufficient that the novices live under obedience, and be ready and willing to be exercised in all Religious duties.

The Mistress of Novices would sin by neglecting her duty in this respect; for it is through her negligence, that those who are unfit for the Religious life, and incapable of observing its obligations, might be admitted to profession, to the great detriment of the Convent and the regular observance.

Fr. Dominic of the Mother of God (Passionist), in his *Philotea*, gives some useful instruction for the Mistress of novices which I may here quote:—

“The office of Mistress of novices is a most delicate and important one, for on it depends the good training of the novices, the well-being of Religious Communities, and the preservation and progress of conventual spirit.

“This is an office that demands great patience with the young novices, and it is very difficult to possess this gift unless the Mistress loves them cordially. How could a mother ever be able to bear the troubles of her little children without maternal affection? In like manner the Mistress cannot have sufficient patience to bear with the troubles of her novices without loving them as a mother. . . . She should be careful not to show partiality for any one of them, but be equal in her manner towards all. This need not prevent her being more kind and attentive to such as are weak and in need of special help.

“In giving correction, let her do so with charity and also with firmness, and let her guard against assuming a certain authority in her admonitions or making use of irritating expressions, such as, ‘I am surprised at you!’ ‘I never heard the like!’ ‘I never saw such a thing!’ ‘In all my experience,’ and the like. She should in all admonitions endeavour to persuade the mind as well as the heart and therefore show the novices the reasons of the correction, and the evil consequences of their conduct and the great danger to themselves on account of it, that thus they may be persuaded to correct themselves.

“To gain their hearts she must have maternal affection for them and compassionate their weaknesses. Let her extenuate their faults and never suppose them to have been committed through malice, but rather through thoughtlessness and weakness. It was thus our Divine Saviour acted when correcting St. Peter



and the other Apostles who slept when He was in prayer, after having said, *What! could'st thou not watch one hour with me?* He added, *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.* He did not aggravate the fault, but lessened it by excusing their weakness and praising the goodness of their wills or *the spirit.* She should give encouragement to delinquents, by reminding them that with the divine assistance they may be able to amend, and that they must not be disheartened by their faults, but take occasion from them to be humble, to distrust themselves and place all their confidence in God."

In conclusion I wish to give one word of advice to the Mistress and her novices about spiritual doubts and difficulties. Let them know and remember that as long as a temptation is troublesome to them there is no sin committed, because if it be troublesome to them and only gives annoyance it is an evident sign that it is not willed or wished for, and if not wished for what harm can it do? No sin is committed unless it comes from the will. The trouble which afflicts the soul, the displeasure which is felt in spiritual difficulties are only the effects of the grace of God acting within us. Let them also remember that God often communicates Himself to the soul in the midst of darkness and desolation. That is the time to show our fidelity to Him, and to be faithful in sufferings and trials is the surest sign of our progress in virtue and perfection.

### SECTION III.

#### *The Bursar.*

The office of Bursar is occupied with the care of the body rather than the care of the soul.

It is the duty of the Bursar to attend to the necessary expenses of the Convent. To enter the accounts in a book of administration, to superintend the cooking, to provide the victuals, the clothing and the necessary things for the Community.

St. Leonard of Port Maurice says that this is the hardest, the most dangerous and the most distracted office in the Community. There is the danger on the one side of parsimony and stinginess through which charity is violated and the Sisters afflicted, and on the other, there is the danger of prodigality through which justice is violated and the Convent has to suffer. To avoid excess on the one side and the other let the Bursar take the following directions for her guidance.

1. She cannot give away or dispose of the goods of the Convent

except in accordance with the powers she may have received from the Superior. She would, therefore, sin against her vow of poverty by spending money or incurring expenses without the express or tacit permission of the Superior.

Some think that she can give to a Sister something that is necessary and which has been unjustly refused by the Superior; because, in this case, she would be only supplying the defect of the Superior.

2. She would also sin by distributing the goods of the Convent, not according to the mind of the Superior, but according to her own will and judgment; because that would be to act as a proprietor, and not simply as an administrator. Thus, if she were to spend a notable sum of money in things useful to the Convent against the Superior's wish, it would be acting as if the money and things belonged to her, so that she might do as she liked with them, whilst in reality they do not belong to her more than to any other Sister.

3. She would sin by neglecting to provide for the nuns—for the sick as well as for those in health. This provision should be made abundantly according to the statutes of the Institute. Because from the time that the nuns gave themselves to the state of Religion at their profession, and became incorporated with the community and gave themselves to its service, they are in justice entitled to be properly maintained, and by the law of nature they are entitled to participate in things necessary both in the corporal and spiritual order. The Bursar could only be excused from supplying necessities when the poverty and want of the Convent would prevent her doing so, in which case all should bear their share in the common suffering and privation. For this reason, she should not be parsimonious or mean with the Religious, but use a prudent and discreet economy, which consists in providing the Religious with everything to which they are entitled, and in seeing that nothing is lost or wasted through her own fault or the fault of servants under her. In regard to the Religious themselves it is better to be liberal than stingy, so that no one may want anything, and that all may be contented, and it is better that the food, clothing, etc., be plentiful rather than scarce.

4. In regard to the sick, they should be provided abundantly with everything they need and treated in the best manner possible. The sick are pleasing to God and special objects of charity, and therefore the greatest care should be taken of them and all necessary medical aid should be provided for them. On this point, let her not be suspicious or uncharitable by attributing

the illness of the Sisters to their imaginations, or saying that they exaggerate their ailments and go to bed for nothing at all. For, although it is true that pretences and vain imaginations in regard to health may be formed in some characters, we have not to suppose too easily and without sufficient reason that a sick nun is deluded in this way. Besides, the want of mortification in some is a less evil than the want of charity in those in office, and even in the cases supposed, there will often be found real need of assistance, and real illness when a Sister sooner than speak about it will remain in pain and suffering to the injury of her health. Such would often be the result of the want of sympathy or any uncharitableness towards the sick.

The Bursar can distribute alms according to the custom of the Convent; because in receiving her office she receives with it all that is required for the fulfilment of that office, and, therefore, the tacit permission for the usual alms-giving.

She cannot, however, lend or give away the goods of the Convent without the leave of the Superior; because in the case of lending, the things are often injured, and there is the danger of never getting them back, and, therefore, loss to the Convent; and to give away things would be an exercise of dominion over them, and therefore, a violation of the vow of poverty.

#### SECTION IV.

##### *The Sacristan.*

This is one of the holiest employments in the Convent, inasmuch as it affords an opportunity of being almost continually in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. The occupations of the Sacristan are in immediate connection with sacred things. As they have to be used in the divine service, all Sacristy things should be kept neat and clean, especially the sacred vestments and vessels that are required for the celebration of Mass and the decoration of the Altar. Concerning this office, more questions are asked by nuns than any other office in the Community. I shall here answer some of the principal questions; I cannot undertake to answer all that concerns this office.

1. Is it a sin to neglect to keep the lamp lighted before the Blessed Sacrament? Yes, because a like reverence should be paid to the Eucharist enclosed in the ciborium or tabernacle, as when offered in Sacrifice, since it is the same Sacred Body of Christ. And as it would be a sin to celebrate Mass without a light, so it would be a sin to leave the Blessed Sacrament without a light.

In both cases the fault would be against the reverence due to our Saviour, the ancient custom, and the rubrics of the Church. Therefore, the Sacristan should be careful to keep the lamp of the Sanctuary always burning. To neglect it for a notable time, as, for example, a whole day, is considered by many authors a mortal sin. But it would only be a venial sin to neglect it only for a short time, say for an hour, or even more, and it is no sin if the negligence is not wilful.

The proper oil should be used for this purpose, and the lamp, strictly speaking, should be before or in front of the Altar of the Blessed Sacrament, and not on one side.\* The oil used should be olive oil, except in some countries, where, with the approbation of the Bishop, other vegetable oils are permitted to be used.

2. May the Sacristan or one of the other nuns serve Mass in the absence of the proper server?

Yes, she may answer the Mass, but from a distance. In this she does not, strictly speaking, minister at the altar, which is forbidden to females; and, in answering from a distance she is merely in the position of the others who assist at the Holy sacrifice.

She may also speak to the Chaplain or other priests who come to officiate in the Convent Chapel about matters concerning their and her office; because when an office is given to a nun all the permissions necessary for the ordinary fulfilment of her office are also granted with it.

She must not, however, admit other priests besides the Chaplain and those duly authorised to celebrate Mass in the Convent. The restrictions and directions of the Bishop have to be faithfully observed on this point.

3. Is it lawful to give for use sacred vestments that are soiled or torn, and when should they be considered unfit for use?

It would be against reverence and decency to give torn and soiled vestments for the sacred functions, and therefore a sin. Innocent III. in the Council of Lateran ordered that all vestments should be suitable, clean, and well kept, which would not be the case if they were torn or soiled. It would be very improper to neglect those stains in sacred things, which in things profane are regarded as indecorous.

Vestments are to be considered as unfit for use, when in comparison with ordinary costumes, they are of such a description

that a decent respectable man would be ashamed to wear them. There is no definite rule to guide us in this matter, but it is left to our own judgment and common sense. In forming an opinion on the state of the vestments, we should take into consideration the state of the Church and the place in which they are used; because vestments that would be unbecoming in a grand Cathedral, might suit very well and be very acceptable in a poor country chapel.

The sacred vestments, as long as they retain their own proper form, should not be applied to profane uses; as, for example, to put on a chasuble for washing clothes, or a maniple or stole to dust out the Sacristy. This would be wrong and a profanation. The sacred vestments should not be used either in comedies or plays and the like, even if they be of a sacred character; because even though the play may be pious and the place holy, the performance is profane, and therefore it would be a profanation of the sacred vestments to use them for this purpose.

After they are torn up and have lost their form, they may be converted to profane uses; because, the reverence due to them is on account of their sacredness, and the benediction given to them. As soon therefore as they lose the blessing they lose the title to reverence, and they lose the blessing as soon as the form is destroyed, so that they may then be used as any other material, as if they were never blessed. It is however more becoming, and more in accordance with the practice of the Church, that the sacred vestments after they have lost their form and blessing should be burned rather than converted into any other use.

They may also be sold or exchanged for other vestments.

4. May the Sacristan touch the chalices, corporals, and sacred vessels when the B. Sacrament is not in them? She may, for this belongs to her office, as she has to clean the sacred vessels and change the corporals from one place to another and from one burse to another, and this is sufficient reason for touching them. She may also wash the corporals and purificators after they receive the first washing by a priest or by one in S. Orders. But by a Decree of the S. Congregation of Rites of the 12th September, 1857, nuns are not allowed to give the first washing to the corporals, purificators and palls.

The water used in this first washing should be thrown into the sacrarium but if there is no sacrarium, it may be thrown anywhere, provided it may not be trampled upon or treated with disrespect. The rubric ordering the water to be put into the

sacramium is not prescriptive but directive, and therefore need only be observed as far as the end of the rubric requires, namely, that this water be poured out into some becoming place.

5. May the Sacristan on days of obligation and Sundays clean the sacred vessels, wash the corporals and purificators and spend a good part of the day in decorating the altar and working in the Chapel and Sacristry? Yes inasmuch as these works are exercised about sacred things, they cease to be servile and they are not usually the work of servants, but of persons consecrated to God. They are therefore lawful, and it is also lawful to make altar breads on the Sunday, when this cannot well be done beforehand. It is, however, advisable that these things, especially as regards any heavy work, be not done on the Sundays and Holidays without sufficient reason.

The Sacristan when she is occupied for a great part of the day in decorating, and in Church and Sacristry work is exempt from the obligation of fasting. Her labour is considerable, going here and there, and carrying flowers and candlesticks and ornaments from one place to another. Such work is fatiguing and is equivalent to the work of an artisan. Such work also, exempts from the fasts of Rule for the same cause that exempts one from the Ecclesiastical law, is sufficient for exemption from points of Rule.

I may now give a summary of some other items that may be useful for the direction of the Sacristan.

1. The altar breads should be fresh, not more than two or three months old.

2. The consecrated host should be changed every eight or ten days.

3. The altar wine should be genuine and well authenticated.

4. There should be three linen cloths (not cotton) on the Altar for Mass, or a double and one single cloth and no more, and these should be blessed.

5. The Blessed Sacrament cannot be exposed for adoration or Benediction without the permission of the Bishop.

6. There should be at least two *wax* candles lighted for Mass, and six *wax* candles for Exposition or Benediction.

7. On Sundays and Feast Days the High Altar should be decorated in the colour of the Office of the day.

8. On the occasion of the reception and profession, a votive Mass or Solemn Mass of the Holy Ghost cannot be celebrated on Feasts of double rite. But this can be done on *Semi-doubles* and *Simple Feasts* without *Gloria* and *Credo*.

9. When the nuns Communicate on one side of the Altar the

priest always descends and ascends the steps in front of the Altar, and not by the side.

10. When relics are exposed, the rubrics require that two candles be lighted for the relics of the Saints, and four for the relic of the Holy Cross. But relics should not be placed on the Altar when the Blessed Sacrament is exposed.

11. The Blessed Sacrament should only be kept in one place in the Church. It is to be placed on a corporal in a tabernacle, decently ornamented, and locked. The key, according to rubrics, to be kept by the priest. The tabernacle should be covered with a veil. Nothing should be placed on the tabernacle, neither relic or picture or crucifix; and no flower vase or anything else should be placed before the door of the tabernacle. And nothing should be placed in the tabernacle, but the *pix* or *ciborium*, which should be covered with a veil.

The abuse of living and sleeping in that part of the Convent immediately over the Sanctuary, where the Blessed Sacrament is kept, should not be tolerated.

In conclusion, I would remind the Sacristan to thank God often for her office and for the opportunity she has of remaining with Jesus, who is confided to her care. Let her in confidence and love treat with Him. Let her often keep herself in His divine presence, and not leave him alone for long during the day. Let her always keep lighting in her soul the lamps of faith, hope, and charity, in which she should place the oil of holy prayer and recollection. Let the corporal of the heart be kept pure and clean for Jesus to repose there; and let the sacred tabernacle of the soul be kept free from every stain that may displease Him; and adorned with the flowers of virtue always fresh and odoriferous.

#### SECTION V.

##### *The Infirmarian and the care of the Sick.*

The care of the sick has always been regarded by the Saints as a duty of the greatest importance. St. Ignatius was accustomed to take upon himself the duty of visiting and consoling the sick after he had discharged his other heavy duties. He would rise in the night to assure himself that nothing was wanting to the sick. Some Saints have even sold the sacred vessels in order to give help to Christ's suffering poor. *I was sick and you visited me*, will be said to the just by the Sovereign Judge on the last day, thus showing us that charity towards the sick is one of the

titles to an eternal recompense. Sickness is the usual forewarning of death, and on this account also, it has the strongest claim to our care and attention.

The directions for the sick and their infirmarians are of the same kind, and correlative, and we may therefore treat of the duties and obligations of both, taking them however separately.

1. *The sick.* Is the sick nun obliged to obey the orders of the physician? Some think that she is obliged to do so under sin; because everyone is bound to use the necessary means for preserving her health and she has not dominion over her own body, therefore whatever the physician prescribes as necessary for health ought to be observed.

Others however, hold the opposite opinion. It is right to place a certain amount of faith in doctors as in every expert in his own art, but no one is obliged by any precept to obey them. Indeed it would be unwise to do so sometimes; for it is well known that some of that profession hold theories at variance with Catholic Theology. It is also held, that in case of a dangerous operation such as the amputation of a leg or arm or other member, the patient is not bound to obey, even for the sake of preserving life, inasmuch, as no one is bound to preserve life under such difficulties. The same may be said of a grave moral difficulty, as of the physical difficulty; but, I think, that practically speaking, both the physical and moral difficulty may be so mitigated that it would be very wrong to advise a nun not to obey, in any case where the preservation of life is at stake. She can obey and I think she ought to obey, notwithstanding the difficulty, whether physical or moral. Besides the moral difficulty is often imaginary and against ordinary common sense, and when it is of this kind it ought to be despised rather than attended to.

The sick person would sin by refusing human remedies in the hope that God might cure her by a miracle. This would be tempting God, by exposing herself to danger without reason, in the expectation that God would free her from it. But in case there is no danger of death or of shortening life, one may neglect to use remedies to alleviate pain for the purpose of mortification, or to participate in the Passion and sufferings of Christ. This would be pious and meritorious sometimes. But she cannot refuse remedies with the intention of shortening her life, in order to be the sooner free from the crosses and troubles of this world. Because, the escaping from the troubles of this world is not a good of such moment as to be compared to life itself, much less to be preferred before it. As long therefore as there is hope of life, it



would be wrong to refuse remedies inasmuch as no one is master or lord of himself.

On the other hand, a Religious should not be too solicitous about health, so as to desire to consult the most eminent physicians, to obtain most expensive medicines, as this would be to the injury of the Convent and to the detriment of Religious poverty; and if the same Religious were dying in the world and could only have the aid of the ordinary physician and remedies, she ought not, now, to put the Convent to extraordinary expenses.

When is a sick nun excused from saying her Office?

She is excused from this obligation whenever the recital of the Office would be a grave inconvenience to her or occasion serious danger to her health. A slight sickness or a slight inconvenience would not be sufficient reason for omitting the Office. In case of doubt, the opinion of the doctor or Superior can decide, and may be followed. Nuns may be dispensed from the Office or exempt from the obligation of saying it for lesser reasons than priests and monks. Thus a headache or indisposition might be considered as sufficient reason for exempting them from the Office.

It does not always follow that a nun is able to say her Office: if she is able to spend the greater part of the day in familiar conversation, or in reading for the sake of recreation, or in sewing, etc., for these things do not require any serious attention, but rather recreate the mind, and, therefore, do not aggravate the disease whilst serious prayer and saying the Office, of their own nature, are troublesome and oppress the mind.

Nor is the sick nun obliged to say her Office on her recovery from a serious illness, for she is then weak, and the weakness left after a disease is reputed illness, and the Church, as a wise and tender mother, wishes her sick children to have the rest they need. As to the length of time allowed for exemption from Office during convalescence no rule can be laid down. It is left to the judgment of the prudent.

If the sickness impedes indefinitely the saying of the office, we need not scrupulously inquire as to whether the sick nun is able to say a part of the Office, one or more Hours or not. Because an impediment that is indefinite is regarded as absolute, and it is in this way that custom interprets the law, so that the sick nun need not trouble about saying any part of the Office when she is exempt indefinitely from the obligation of saying the Office. If through illness or any other reason she is unable to say Office by herself, she is not obliged to get a companion to say it with.

her or to accept one who may offer her services, because to say Office with a companion is a privilege or favour that she can freely use or refuse. These remarks apply to those nuns who are obliged to the Divine Office, and they may serve as a means of instruction to those who are accustomed to say the Little Office of the B. Virgin or other vocal prayers ordered by the Rule. It may be further asked when nuns, by reason of illness, are exempt from the fasts of the Church?

Ill health and sickness excuse all christians from the obligation of fasting, and therefore they excuse Religious; but to settle scruples I may notice a few things concerning this obligation. Under the name of the sick should be included those who, though not actually ill, are nevertheless weak and delicate, and these are exempt from fasting, not only in order to escape disease, but because their state is equivalent to a continuous sickness. The nature of the sickness and its intensity or gravity sufficient to exempt from fasting, is left to the judgment of the prudent. Even Confessors cannot always be sure of the state sufficient to exempt one from fasting. If the illness or weakness impedes the performance of other usual functions it is considered sufficient; or, if one is so weakened through bad health, as to be thrown into a state resembling old age she should be considered exempt. These remarks apply to fasts of the Church. As to the fasts of the Rule they are to be regarded as obligatory in the same way as other points of Rule, and regulated by the same causes and dispensations.

A sick nun doubtful whether she should say Office or fast, is bound to obey, should the Superior command her not to say her Office and not to fast. Because in these cases, she is to believe, that by giving such a command the Superior exercises her just right and dispenses her *ministerialiter*, or declares her dispensed, and the sick nun should conform herself to this command as to the judgment of the prudent.

When are the sick exempt from the obligation of hearing Mass? It is true, that those who live within the walls of a Convent are not to be easily excused from hearing a Mass of obligation; as they have not to suffer the inconvenience of going out. However, the sick are always excused. Not only those confined to bed, but those who cannot go to the Chapel without injury to their health. When the illness is such as to prevent the nuns performing their usual duties or leaving their rooms, so that great care is required for their recovery, they are exempt from the obligation of hearing Mass. Also the weak and con-

valescent after a severe illness should easily be excused for fear of a relapse, and especially in the Winter time, or in cold damp weather.

As to having Mass said in the cell, it has to be remembered that whatever privilege may have existed in olden times (by the concession of Pius IV., 18th March, 1561), it is now certain, that the privilege of saying Mass on a portable altar in a sick room or cell, ought not to be used without the permission of the Bishop or Ordinary.

Can the sick nun receive often the Holy Viaticum? Yes she can, when in danger of death. As to how often, some of the older Theologians were not agreed. Thus, Novarus said every month; Henrique, every eight or ten days; Suarez, every six days; Ludovicus, à S. Joanne and Vasques, every second day. As long as the danger of death lasts, the sick person can receive the *Viaticum* not fasting very often, and according to many every day, which opinion St. Liguori does not consider improbable.\*

There is no law against the administration of the *Viaticum* every day if the danger of death continues, and if the Confessor thinks it advisable. It is left to his discretion and judgment. As there is no law against it, and as the B. Sacrament can be received every day, and as it is most profitable to the sick person, it should be given frequently, especially in the case of a Religious, who during life has been accustomed to go to Communion often in the week. It is as we know, a Sacrament instituted for the spiritual refecton of the soul, to augment in it the grace of God, to strengthen it against dangers, and to enable it to overcome temptations, and at no time is this spiritual food more needed than at the time of sickness and in preparation for death.

Extreme Unction should be administered when there is danger of death from sickness, but only once in the same sickness, unless after a long interval of two or three months when the disease may be considered as having taken a new form; or in case the sick person recovers, and falls again by a relapse into the danger of death, then Extreme Unction should be administered again.

*The Infirmarian.* Most of the Infirmarian's duties are implied in the instructions given for the sick. She has to see that all these things are observed, and there are also a few other important points to be attended to.

1. The Infirmarian Sister is bound to the same care and dili-

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\* Hom. Apost. xv. 47.

gence in her office as are ordinary nurses. They are not bound to unusual and extraordinary care. For, when this office is imposed on a nun and she accepts it, it is understood that she does not undertake to carry an insupportable burthen, and hence speaking of her strict obligation she is bound only to the usual ordinary diligence in her care of the sick.

2. She would expose herself to sin by neglecting to apply the remedies prescribed by the medical doctor, or by substituting remedies of her own in their stead, for, in thus acting she might easily and without reason hasten or aggravate the danger of death. It would also be a fault to neglect to give the medicines at the proper time, or to neglect giving the food prescribed, or to neglect to provide for the wants of the sick, by omitting to make them known to the Superior in time, if through these omissions and negligence any serious harm or inconvenience has to be suffered by the sick under her charge.

3. The Infirmarian is excused from hearing Mass on a day of obligation, when her absence would cause great affliction to the sick, and when she has no substitute to take her place.

4. When she has many sick persons to look after, she may, on this account, be exempt from the obligation of fasting; because continued waiting on the sick is equivalent to hard work. And if she has to watch by the sick a great part of the night she is not bound to fast the next day, for the want of sleep at the proper time is trying enough to one's strength without adding fasting to it.

5. She is also exempt from the Office when her whole time, morally speaking, is taken up with the attendance on the sick, so that she cannot without grave inconvenience say her Office, inasmuch as the duty of charity is more important and more excellent than the duty of saying the Office. This is also to be understood even if she could spare some little time for recreation. One is not bound in order to say Office to detract from the time allowed for meals and sleep, and in the same manner one is not obliged to detract from the time proper for recreation, as this is as necessary for the health of the body as food and sleep, especially when one is weakened and tired with preceding occupations.

There is a question asked by Theologians that may be introduced here, namely, whether the Infirmarian with danger to her life, would be obliged to attend a Sister suffering from a contagious disease, and whether the Superior can command her to do so.

The answer to both questions is *yes*; because a Superior can order all those exterior acts that are necessary for the common good

and the subjects are bound to obey even with danger to life; as a king can command his subjects to fight in a just war although there is danger of great loss of life. Besides, there would be but scant provision for the preservation of fraternal charity in Religion if Sisters could refuse to take care of one of their companions when struck down by some contagious disease.

Some nuns, called Infirmarian Sisters, promise by vow to attend all kinds of sick cases to which they may be sent by their Superiors. They are of course bound to this obligation, which they have taken upon themselves.

The Superior should use great discretion in the choice of the Sisters whom she may destine to attend contagious diseases. It would not be right to send to such cases Sisters that are weak and delicate, and she should not expose any Sister to unnecessary danger.

The danger in these diseases is not always imminent, and may, generally speaking, be regarded as remote. We seldom hear of nurses and Infirmarian Sisters catching diseases from their patients, and few deaths take place from such occasions.

The care of the sick and dying, and providing them with spiritual helps, surpasses all other duties in its importance because of its immediate and everlasting results.

Dr. Moriarty, in the allocution to his clergy on the care of the sick and dying, gives the following admonitions, with which I may conclude this chapter.

"We should remember that if a soul passes the threshold of eternity unprepared to meet the judgment of God, even His boundless mercies afford no remedy, no redemption.

"Upon the state in which a soul is found in death eternity depends. Our judgment will not turn on the average of good or evil found in our lives, though our merit or demerit may be thereby increased. But whether we shall be eternally happy or eternally miserable shall be decided by our being in a state of grace or in a state of sin when we are leaving this life. If we had spent all our years, from the hour of our baptism, in God's service, if we had spent them even in the practice of the most exalted virtue, and if at the last moment we yielded to temptation, we should be lost for ever. If, on the other hand, we had spent our lives in the constant commission of the foulest imaginable crimes, but if our last free act on earth was one of sincere repentance an eternity of bliss should be our lot.

"Let us reflect, also, on the prominence given to the care of the sick in the words and acts of our Divine Master.

"This is the purpose of the Apostolic Mission. *And he sent them to preach the Kingdom of God and to heal the sick.\** Wherever they should turn their steps the sick were to be the first objects of their care. *And into what city soever you enter. . . heal the sick that are therein.†* The care of the sick is to be one of the cardinal points on which the judgment of God will turn. *I was sick . . . and you did not visit me.‡* The great miracles of our Divine Lord, the chief manifestation of His power, and mercy are for the sick, so that His mission is thus summed up by the Evangelist:—

*"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all diseases and infirmities among the people."§*

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## CHAPTER IV.

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### THE OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES OF LAY-SISTERS.

According to the Rules of the various Institutes, Lay-Sisters are admitted or not, as the case may be. In speaking of the Enclosure, it was stated that in enclosed Convents Lay-Sisters should be employed, and no secular servants admitted into the Enclosure without necessity. It may therefore be said that Convents strictly enclosed are obliged to have Lay-Sisters.

Other Convents are free to admit them or not. In many Institutes of uncloistered nuns Lay-Sisters are not admitted, and in these the Choir Sisters have to do the manual work and duties that fall to the Lay-Sisters in enclosed Convents. These duties have to be performed in every Convent, and it is of them rather than of the Lay-Sisters themselves that I wish to speak in this chapter.

At the reception and profession of Lay-Sisters all those things have to be observed which are necessary at the reception and profession of other novices.

The same laws apply to both the Lay and Choir novices except in what regards the dowry. As a rule a dowry is not required in the reception of Lay-Sisters, but only some small

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\* St. Luke ix. 2.

† St. Luke x. 9.

§ St. Matt. iv. 23.

‡ St. Matt. xxv. 43.

amount to pay the expenses incurred at the reception and profession. The necessity of the Convent and their labour is sufficient reason for their free admission. If, however, it should happen that a great many desire to enter a Convent as Lay-Sisters and to have the advantages of the Religious Life, a dowry might be required from the supernumeraries, as otherwise the Convent would not be able to maintain all.

Lay-Sisters are true Religious, in the same sense as Choir Sisters. They take the same vows of Religion, and in these the essence of the Religious State consists. They are therefore bound by all the obligations of the vows in the same manner as the Choir Sisters, that is, in regard to poverty, chastity, and obedience. They are not bound to recite the Divine Office or the Little Office of the B. V. M. They also enjoy all the privileges of Religious in the same manner and to the same extent as the Choir Sisters, that is, all the rights, blessings, and indulgences of the Religious Institute to which they belong, inasmuch as they are really incorporated with that Institute.

In Convents where the strict Enclosure is observed Lay-Sisters are bound by it; therefore, they cannot go into the church outside the Enclosure to decorate the altar, and they cannot go outside even to close the gates or doors. If the custom anywhere exists of the Lay-Sisters being sent out to *quest*, the custom may be tolerated when there is necessity for it, but without necessity it ought not to be done. When the Sisters are sent out to *quest* there should always be two of them together, and these should be of a mature age, and of such prudence and virtue as would be likely to edify seculars by their example, according to the prescription of Canon Law. Moreover, they should return to the Convent before night.

When it is necessary to go far from home, out of the town or diocese in which the Convent is situated, they should obtain the sanction of their Bishop, and of the Bishop in whose diocese they wish to collect alms. Whilst away from home and unable to obtain hospitality in a Convent, they should be careful to stay at the houses of some good Christian families in the different places in which they may find themselves. They will always be able to find some benefactors of the Convent, or some people well disposed towards religion and Religious who will be glad to receive them and give them hospitality.

Besides what is stated above, there are some particular questions to be answered regarding the duties of Lay-Sisters.

1. Are the Lay-Sisters obliged under sin to say the prayers

prescribed for them by the Rule in the same way as the Choir-Sisters are bound to their prayers? They are not: because, generally speaking, the Rule does not of itself bind under sin. The Choir-Sisters are bound by custom to say the Divine Office, as explained in a former chapter, but no such obligation exists or has ever been established in respect of the prayers of the Lay-Sisters. This may grieve some of these good Sisters. It will appear to some of them that in the Convent they have very little time for prayer. They thought before entering that they would have much more time for prayer: that they would have a free hour each day for their private devotions, for visiting the Blessed Sacrament and reciting their Rosaries, and they may feel disappointed when such is not the case. They may be tempted to contrast this state of things with their former homes and manner of living. Then, perhaps, they were able to go often to the Chapel and spend hours before the Blessed Sacrament, and hear, even on week days, all the Masses there celebrated. Now, they can only hear the Community Mass; have only a short time for meditation, etc., in common with the other nuns and no time for private devotions.

Supposing all this to be the case, they are spiritually better off than they were in the world. For *then* they followed their own will, whereas *now* they have to sacrifice that will, and conform all their actions to obedience and to the Divine will, in which the perfection of sanctity consists. At the same time, they should remember, that the ancient monks were accustomed to say many prayers and psalms during their manual labours. Let the Lay-Sisters try to imitate them, and whilst they work with their hands, pray with both heart and voice. Besides this, they are bound to pray, like all other Christians, and they are especially bound to pray for their benefactors, both living and dead.

It ought to be understood, that for their greater perfection and sanctity they should attend to the prayers and other devotions prescribed by the Rule, and that what is said above only concerns the obligation of these prayers in the strict sense of binding under sin, but not meaning that any Sister should exempt herself from them, for Religious especially ought not to neglect prayer. Moreover, the very labours of the Lay-Sisters may be offered as prayers to God, inasmuch as they co-operate in the prayers of the others by working and serving the Convent while the Choir Sisters chant and pray in the Chapel.

2. Would Lay-Sisters be guilty of sin by neglecting their duties in the Convent?



Yes, they would, and that mortally, if their negligence were very great. At profession a contract was entered into between them and the Religious Institute, by which the latter promised to provide them with all, both spiritual and temporal, that would be necessary for their state of life; and they, on their part, undertook to perform according to their strength, all the duties and employments which belong to their state and profession as Lay-Sisters. Hence, they are bound in justice to perform these duties, and wilful negligence in this respect would be a sin against justice.

It is not easy, however, to consider them guilty of mortal sin herein, because they do not always advert to the grave obligation, and Superiors do not always exact it rigorously. Again, it seldom happens that their negligence is of such a serious and grave nature as to amount to a grievous injustice and a mortal sin. They would sin by neglecting to take proper care of the goods of the Convent which are committed to their charge. As I explained in the chapter on poverty, this negligence would be against the vow. The same is to be said of destroying such things or permitting them to be destroyed, through wilful neglect and carelessness.

3. Is it lawful for the Lay-Sisters to cook and prepare food for the Religious on Sundays and Feast Days?

Yes, inasmuch as this is as necessary in Convents as it is in secular houses and all that is necessary and customary in this way, may be lawfully done. They should not however, on those days, undertake any heavy servile work which can be done during the week; this would be sinful as in the case of seculars, and only light matter would excuse them from mortal sin. As to the length of time required to constitute grave matter in working on Sundays, there is some difference of opinion. St. Alphonsus after giving the various opinions seems to agree with that which says that the sin is not mortal unless over two hours be spent in the work. It is therefore commonly taught that two-and-a-half hours would be required, and many Doctors require even three hours for grave matter, especially if the work is not very heavy. The same may be said of a case where there is some slight necessity but not sufficient to justify the work being done on Sunday.

4. Are the Sisters excused from fasting on days when they have hard work to do, such as washing clothes and the like?

They are, because whether we consider the preparation beforehand, the washing itself, or the trouble of putting out the clothes to dry afterwards, it is all really hard work, far more so than

some other works that are admitted by Theologians as sufficient to exempt from the obligation of fasting. This occupation need not be continual, but if it be for only one or two days it exempts on those days from the fast. Moreover, it need not be for the whole day but it suffices that a good part of the day be spent in such laborious duties, otherwise the strength and health of the Sisters would be weakened and injured. They are also exempt from fasting when they have to cook for the Community; this is hard labour for them, it implies many things, such as carrying coal, water, etc., and standing over a large fire and preparing the food.

I may mention that if there is sufficient reason to exempt from the ecclesiastical fast, the same should be considered sufficient to exempt from the fast of Rule, because the Rule does not bind more than the law of the Church.

Besides the above questions, a Canonical difficulty may sometimes arise in connection with the position of a Lay-Sister. It is asked, can a nun, professed as a Choir-Sister, be transferred to the state of a Lay-Sister, or one professed as a Lay-Sister to that of a Choir-Sister?

With reference to the first point, that is, a nun professed as a Choir-Sister being transferred to the state of a Lay-Sister, it is said that this can be done, because the state of Religion is not changed, but remains intact. All agree in saying that such a change should not be made without a grave and just reason, as, for example, in punishment for some great fault, or incapacity for the functions of a Choir-Sister, and I believe that it could not be effected without the consent of the nun herself. A Sister thus transferred would not be bound any longer to the Divine Office; because the custom and obligation of the Office only binds the Choir Sisters, and when one ceases to be a Choir-Sister this obligation ceases also as far as she is concerned.

As to the second part of the question, namely, the transfer of a Lay-Sister to the state of a Choir-Sister, it is not quite so certain whether this can be done. Some declare it to be lawful, for the reason assigned above, that is, because the state of Religion is not thereby changed. When, however, the change is to be made there are three conditions required: 1. A just and grave cause. 2. The consent of the nuns in Chapter. 3. The permission of the Bishop, if the Convent is subject to him, or of the General or Provincial, if the Convent is *exempt*. The permission of the Local Superior is not sufficient in a case of this kind.

Others hold that this change cannot be made without the

authority of the Holy See, and these found their opinion on a decree of the Sacred Congregation so far back as the year 1603, which concerns Religious orders of men, wherein it is said that "One who has received the habit as a Lay-Novice cannot, even during the time of probation, be transferred to the clerical state." There is also another reason assigned for this opinion, namely, that as the permission of the Holy See is required for one to pass from a more severe Order to one less severe, so one cannot without the same authority, pass from a more severe to a less severe state, in the same Institute, and in Religion the state of the Lay-Sisters is more severe, than that of the Choir-Sisters; their life is harder and their occupations are heavier. For this reason, it is thought, that a Lay-Sister cannot be transferred to the state of a Choir-Sister without the authority of the Holy See.

However this may be in a particular case, we may say in general that changes of this kind are not advisable, and those who desire them are not to be encouraged. The Sisters are all advised in the words of St. Paul, *to abide in the same calling in which they are called.\**

In a Lay-Sister the thought of becoming a Choir-Sister is often a very dangerous temptation, it often arises from ambition, it fosters emulations, gives offence to others, and causes in themselves a dislike and disregard for their present condition.

The devil often tempts souls by representing to them the good they *cannot* do, that they may neglect the good they *can* do; and he often makes them seek what they are not able to obtain in order to make them discontented with what they have. Therefore, it may be said, that if changes of this kind were often, or easily allowed, they would prove pernicious and very injurious both to the Convent and to the Sisters. If, however, it should happen, for just and sufficient reasons, and with proper authority, that a Lay-Sister should become a Choir-Sister the nun should go through the Novitiate over again; because during her former Novitiate she was not taught or trained to the duties of a Choir-Sister, and therefore the reason exists for a second Novitiate. This was declared and decided in former times by a decree of the S. Congregation, in the year 1617.

These are the chief points on which I think it necessary to treat in connection with the obligations and duties of the Lay-Sisters.

It is well known that these Sisters deserve great consideration, and that in dealing with them great kindness and charity should

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\* 1 Corinthians, vii. 20.

be used. Their duties are numerous, arduous, and sometimes very difficult. They often receive different commands and requests from different Sisters, and they have to bear with many trials and mortifications. Some complain of, and find fault with them, saying that: "they were once young themselves and they never would think of doing such things as they see the young Sisters doing now!" I have noticed, that it is those who were most troublesome and least useful during their Religious lives who make use of this reproach and argument. They should remember that it is the poor Lay-Sisters who have to do the heavy work of the Convent, in the kitchen, the refectory, the corridors, the dairy, the clothes room, etc., and that on them devolves so much, all those duties in connection with the cleanliness, the tidiness, the brightness, and the poverty of the Convent, and all should therefore endeavour to make their lives happy and peaceful according to the true spirit of holy charity.

Let the Lay Sisters themselves remember that it is well always to have on hand some occupation. To be engaged in manual labour is most profitable and useful, both for soul and body. Let them work religiously, and not for interest or vanity—like the Religious who made two mats instead of one, and thereby lost the merit of his action because his motive was not good. They should not work too earnestly so as to lose necessary sleep on that account, and much less should they labour unnecessarily in such a manner as to injure their health.

They are recommended to make acts of the love of God, of offering, of thanksgiving and contrition during their occupations, because while the body labours the soul should not be allowed to remain, as it were, idly looking on. It ought to do internally another work, making itself more grateful to God, and offering up everything to the greater glory of God.

The difference in the manner of acting, between a spiritual and fervent Religious and the tepid and cold, is that the one remembers to offer her actions to God, the other performs her actions simply as burdensome duties.

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## CONCLUDING CHAPTER.

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### ON CHARITY.

At the beginning of this work, when treating of the obligation of Religious perfection, it was explained that charity is the end

of all the precepts and counsels and that evangelical perfection consists in it alone.

The union of our souls with God by charity is the end of our lives and actions, and towards this therefore, all our obligations and duties should be directed.

We have left the world and entered Religion, we have taken upon us the obligations of our vows and our Rules, and all the other duties of our state for the sole object that we might keep our souls united to God by His holy grace and in the bonds of holy love.

It is, therefore fitting that after having considered our several duties and obligations, and before concluding this work some few reflections should be made on this the most excellent of all virtues. This I now propose to do under a few aspects as it affects Religious, without attempting to give anything like a full dissertation such as the nature and excellence of this virtue would seem to require.

The virtue of charity is two-fold, namely the love of God and the love of our neighbour. On this account it is necessary to divide the chapter into two parts. In the first I shall treat of the love of God, and in the second of the love of our neighbour.

#### FIRST PART.

##### *Charity or the Love of God.*

Charity as a *habit* or virtue is defined. "A theological virtue infused by God into the soul, by which we love Him as the Supreme good for His own sake, and ourselves and our neighbour for God."

Charity as an *act* is either the love of *benevolence* or the love of *concupiscence*. The love of benevolence or disinterested love is that by which we wish good to God, to ourselves and our neighbour, because God is good in Himself. In this it is distinguished from the love of *concupiscence*, interested love, by which we wish good to God and our neighbour because He is good to us.

According to what has just been said, charity is divided into *actual* and *habitual*. The one, a motion of the soul by which we elicit an act of the love of God, the other which signifies the virtue of charity as it abides in the soul.

Actual charity is divided also into the love of *benevolence*, which may be called, also, disinterested love, and into the love of

*concupiscence* or interested love in the sense already mentioned. There is also the love of *appreciation*, by which we esteem some one more than we esteem others, and which, in regard to God, means that charity by which He is loved above all things.

Besides the definition and division of a virtue, it is also well to understand its object and its motive.

The object of charity is primarily God Himself, according to the Cominadment: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . . . . This is the greatest and the First Commandment.* The secondary object of charity comprises ourselves and our neighbour according to the words: *The second is like to this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two Commanaments dependeth the whole law and the prophets.\**

The motive of this virtue, or that which formally specifies it, and distinguishes it from the other supernatural virtues, is the divine goodness. This reason or motive is expressed in the definition of charity when it is said: *Because God is good in Himself.* This, however, is not to be understood in such a way as to exclude a secondary or subsidiary motive, namely, the relative goodness of God, by which he is good to us. The benefits of God are, according to the teaching of St. Thomas, secondary reasons which lead us to love Him and to pay the debt of gratitude which we owe Him.

We have now to ask what are the qualities or conditions of Divine Charity. Out of its numerous qualities I may select three. 1. Our love of God should be the love of *benevolence*, that is, disinterested love. This means that God has to be loved in His essence—in Himself; because in Himself He is infinitely amiable, containing in Himself all wisdom, goodness, and beauty; only the reflection of His goodness and perfection appears in His creatures. It means also that He is to be loved in His will, that is in His law; because it is the law of God, most holy and just in itself according to the words of the Psalmist: *The justices of the Lord are right rejoicing hearts; the commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes. . . The judgments of the Lord are true, justified in themselves. More to be desired than gold and many precious stones, and sweeter than honey and the honey-comb.†*

2. It should be *supreme*, at least in appreciation, that is, in our will and judgment it should be before and above everything else; such was the love of which the holy Patriarch Abraham gave us an example, when in obedience to the Divine will, he was ready

\* St. Matt. xxii. 38, *et seq.*

† Ps. xviii. 9-11.

to sacrifice his only son. It need not be supreme in *intensity*, that is in sense and feeling; as, in our present state, our senses and feelings are more easily and strongly moved by corporal and tangible things rather than by spiritual things. This we cannot alter or prevent, for the intensity of our feelings in regard to likes and dislikes, joys, and sorrows, etc., are not always under our own control and management. Hence, there may be in our souls the fulness of Divine Charity at the same time that we experience the greatest bitterness and dereliction of spirit. The love of God need not be *sensible* or felt, since it resides in the superior and intellectual part of the soul and its acts and dwelling place belong to the will.

The Charity of God may also include the love of *concupiscence* or interested love, that is, it is right and meritorious to love God through the hope of reward. This is a good and holy species of love. The V. Rev. Cuthbert Doyle explains this very clearly in his "Principles of Religious Life."\* "To forbid men to love God in this way and for such motives as these, would be to fall into the errors of Michael Molinos, a Spanish priest, who in the 17th century taught among other things equally false, that he who loves God should never think of reward or punishment, of heaven or of hell, of death or of eternity, but should conform himself entirely to the Divine will, committing to God the care of all things, so as to make no account of temptations of the devil, nor to trouble himself about resisting them, and thus, without effort suffer God to do his will in him. This system is called Quietism, or false mysticism. It is opposed to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures which bids us "seek first the kingdom of God."† This means nothing else than to love God, because He is good to us, our Lord bids us pray to his Father, saying, "Thy Kingdom come," and when speaking to His Apostles, He tells them expressly "to rejoice and be glad, because their reward is very great in Heaven."‡ Now if it were an evil thing to desire a reward in Heaven, which is really the possession of God, Christ would never have proposed it to us as an object of our desires. David in the Psalms, says that he made his heart observe the commandments of God "for the sake of reward,"§ which should be given to him. "O, man!" says St. Austin, "if thou dost waver in thy purpose, be firm in the sure hope of reward."|| Finally, the Council of Trent settles the whole question by saying: "If any

\* Ch. iii. Sec. 1. St. † Matthew, vi. 33. ‡ St. Matthew, v. 12.

§ Psalm, cxviii. 112.

|| Sermon, 345.

one shall say, that the just man sins, when, in view of reward, he performs any good action, let him be anathema."\*

After the condemnation of the system of Quietism, another system made its appearance in France, known as, Spiritual Quietism or Semi-Quietism. It was a system of doctrine, much the same as that of the Quietists, but not so gross. Its authors kept their doctrine free from the impure taints of the Quietists. The chief author of this system was Jane of Guyon, a noble lady, a widow, who afterwards became a nun. Its doctrine was like Quietism as regards the pure love of God; indifference as to life, death, heaven and hell; as to the annihilation of the soul, etc.

As this woman, Jane of Guyon was remarkable before the world for piety, she gained many to her cause, especially Fenelon, the pious bishop of Cambray. He thought that she erred rather in her manner of explaining her doctrine than in the doctrine itself, and he tried to explain her views in a work which he published, entitled "*Explication des maximes des Saints sur la vie interieure*" wherein he endeavoured to explain in a common sense manner the new mystical doctrine on contemplation; the passive state, the spiritual death of the soul, the transformation, and spiritual union with God and other things of this kind, especially the theory of the pure love of God which he defended strongly in his book. This appears to have been a system of spiritual and pious *cant* as well as being erroneous, and it is not to be wondered at that Bossuet wrote so vigorously against it, though he is blamed sometimes for his severity towards Fenelon.

Innocent XII. condemned twenty-three propositions of Fenelon's book concerning the pure love of God, the perfect quiet of the soul, the slight value of vocal prayer, the excellence of contemplation above meditation, the passive mode of resisting temptations and other things of this kind. The Brief, *cum alias*, was published on the 12th March, 1699 and condemned the propositions in the obvious sense of the words, and in the opinions expressed by them as *temerarious, scandalous, . . . offensive to pious ears and pernicious in practice as well as erroneus*.

Fenelon not only submitted to the Pontifical censure, but read the Brief in public to his flock and admonished them and all his clergy to receive it with submission and obedience.

I may add that Jane de Guyon died piously in the year 1717, after having made an humble and clear profession of faith.†

From the above we see that not even the first and essential

\*Sess. vi. Ch. 31.

† Haine. Principia et Errores. Quietistæ.



law of God escaped the false teaching and vain notions of men. The simple doctrine of the love of God was made the subject of error and pernicious teaching to the injury and ruin of many souls.

From these examples we may learn how easily even devout souls may be deceived and led into the most serious errors, and also, that even in the duty of the love of God such souls require proper direction that they may be safely guided as to their interior acts and affections, as well as in their exterior conduct.

The next point to be explained in connection with this virtue is its necessity, and on this I wish first of all to state clearly the doctrine of the love of God as explained by Theologians.

Habitual charity is necessary for all as a means to salvation, that is, without it salvation cannot possibly be obtained. It is required in the case of adults, inasmuch as it is necessarily connected with sanctifying grace without which no one can be saved. It is necessary also for infants, and they receive this virtue with the grace of God at Baptism.

Actual charity, or an act of the love of God is necessary as a means of salvation for all adults who have come to the use of reason: St. John says, *And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God; He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is charity.*

This act of charity should be *supernatural* in its principle, inasmuch as it should proceed from grace; in its object, inasmuch as this is God, as He is the author of our being and our supernatural end; and in its motive which is God's goodness in the supernatural order as known by faith.

Charity is not only necessary as a means to salvation, but it is also necessary by reason of the Divine precept. There is a special precept to love God above all things, both by internal affection or the love of the heart and by external effect, namely, by observing the Commandments.

This affirmative precept of charity obliges of *itself*: 1st. As soon as we come to the use of reason, or as soon as there is the sufficient knowledge of God as infinitely good above all things. To neglect for a long time after coming to the use of reason to make an act of the love of God would be a grievous sin. A few days, and sometimes even a few weeks are not considered a long time for this purpose, as it admits of some moral latitude.

2ndly. It obliges sometimes during life. A proposition which said, that it was probable that the precept of charity towards God did not rigorously bind every five years, was condemned by Inno-

cent XI. So that it certainly obliges of *itself* oftener than that ; and the probable opinion is that it binds at least once a year, and some hold that it is obligatory once a month. This practice is not only advisable, but acts of this virtue should be encouraged as often as possible, since it is difficult to live in a holy manner and to observe the law of God and satisfy other obligations without charity ; for this virtue must be preserved and strengthened by its own acts. It is, however, said that every meritorious work done with the intention of pleasing God may be considered an act of love. *Ex. gr.*, there is an act of love contained in the Lord's Prayer each time we say from our hearts the words *hallowed be Thy name ; Thy will be done.*

3rdly. According to the most probable opinion it obliges of *itself* at the end of life, that is at the hour of death, or when in danger of death. This, according to St. Alphonsus, is the case even when one is not conscious of any mortal sin on the soul. Because it is then required that one should turn by a perfect act of love towards Him with Whom he desires to be for ever united in heaven. At that hour one should use the most secure and the safest means to obtain salvation and thus repair by an act of the perfect love of God any defects there may have been in the reception of the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance.

Indirectly, when a Confessor cannot be had, we are bound to make an act of Charity as often as we are obliged to recover the grace of God and become justified ; because then we are bound to make an act of perfect contrition, in which an act of Charity is, at least virtually, included. This obligation would also urge in a case when a person would find it necessary to make an act of Charity in order to overcome some temptation. Because when one is bound to an end he is bound to the means necessary for obtaining that end.

Besides the cases here enumerated, it cannot be said that an explicit act of Charity is strictly obligatory. It suffices that it be made implicitly as, for example, by wishing that God may not be offended by anyone ; that all may love and adore him ; by praying devoutly that His name may be sanctified and His will may be done ; by resisting temptations ; by abstaining from sin because it offends God, and by doing good works in order to please him.

This is what is meant by our Saviour's precept : *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind.*

In these words we have also signified to us the manner in

which this precept should be observed. With the whole *heart* and *soul* and *mind*.

Fr. Fr. Xavier Schouppe commenting on these words explains them in the following manner.

"With thy whole *heart* properly signifies with the *whole will*; to love is the proper act of the will. Hence it must be with the *whole* will not a part only; for the love of God claims the whole heart, and it is not received except with the whole heart. This *totality* or completeness is to be understood not in the positive sense of engaging the full force of the will; for that would be making it Supreme in intensity which is not commanded; but it is to be taken in the negative sense in such a way as to signify that nothing should be kept in the heart contrary to the love of God.

"With the whole *soul*, properly taken this includes the whole animal and sensitive life within us; or if *soul* be taken in the higher sense, it includes all our affections, or all that is contained in the affectionate part of our nature.

"With thy whole *mind*. That is, properly understood, the whole intellect. To love God with the intellect is to assent to all the truths of faith, and to admit nothing into the intellect and its acts that would be contrary to Divine Charity.

"Lucas Brugensis, a pious author, tells us that we need not be too solicitous in distinguishing in this precept, *heart*, *soul*, and *mind*. For under the name of *heart* are included the affections which are called the *soul*; and the intellect which is called the *mind*. And the expression *with thy whole heart, soul and mind* is to be here understood as an energetic repetition by which different words are used to signify and inculcate the same thing."

The same author Schouppe summarizes the whole law of the love of God in the following items:

"1. The extreme degree of this love to the extent of God's worthiness is not commanded, because not even the angels in heaven are capable of this.

"2. Neither is it commanded that we should be always borne towards God by a continual act of love, without any distraction of mind or avulsion of the heart from this most amiable object of our love. This is to be found only in the blessed in heaven.

"3. Nor does it require that we be entirely free from all concupiscence and natural inclinations repugnant to the law of God; such a state is not in the power of man whilst here on earth.

"4. It does command us, however, according to our present condition, to love the Lord our God for His own sake above all

things, if not always in *act*, at least in *habit* (or as to our state of soul) in such a way that we esteem nothing as much as God, and that we refer ourselves and all things to His honour; and that we be prepared to suffer and relinquish everything rather than admit into our souls anything contrary to the love of God or His Divine Will.

"5. The depraved disposition which exists in the sensitive appetite of man does not make him guilty of transgressing this commandment, unless he permits it to seduce his reason, and to rule over his superior nature. On the contrary, the more one resists these evil inclinations, and subjects them to the law of reason and obedience to the law of God, the more is the divine love increased and strengthened in his soul." \*

*The effects and fruits of Charity.*

This virtue is furthermore known by its effects and the fruits which it produces in the soul. By reason of these, also, it commends itself to us, and draws us to itself.

It is called in the Scripture the bond of perfection. It is superior to faith and hope; it perfects all other virtues.† It unites us with God. In the First Epistle of St. John, God Himself is even called Charity.‡

Its effects, however, are clearly signified by our Saviour Himself when He says in the Gospel of St. John §: *If any one love Me he will keep My word and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and will make Our abode with him.*

The love of Christ is here identified with the love of God, and is one and the same thing in itself and in its effects, inasmuch as Christ is God and one with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Hence Christ tells us: He who *seeth Me seeth also the Father*; and *he who hateth Me hateth also the Father*. And He says in this same Chapter of St. John ||: *He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father; and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.* From these texts we learn the effects of Divine love.

1. The mutual love of God: that is, the soul with charity is loved by God with a singular and efficacious love, through which ineffable gifts are bestowed upon it. What glory to the creature to be thus loved by God and by our Lord Jesus Christ, and to enjoy his friendship: *You are my friends*, He says, *if you do the things that I command you* ¶

2. *He will keep My word*, that is, the commandments of God;

\* Schouppe's Evangelia, Dom. XVII. Fest. Pent.

† Col. iii. 14.

‡ iv. 16.

§ xiv. 23.

|| Verse 21.

¶ St. John xv. 14.

such is the efficacy of Divine love that it enables us to keep the law; and He has said: *Blessed are they who hear the word of God and keep it.* He who observes not the commandments, loves not God. St. Gregory says\* "The proof of love is doing the work. The love of God is never idle; it does great things if it is true love; but if it refuses to work it is not love."

3. *I will love him and manifest Myself to him.* This manifestation of God to the soul is effected here by a clearer knowledge of God, of His mysteries, and of His gifts; by a knowledge not only speculative but practical, so that the soul experiences how sweet the Lord is, and is moved to acts of gratitude, love, and praise, so as to be able to say with St. Paul: *Who therefore shall be able to separate us from the charity of Christ?*

In heaven this manifestation is made by the clear vision of God, so that here we see by faith as in a dark manner there we are to behold Him face to face even as He is.

4. *And we will come to Him and will make our abode with Him.* This signifies the indwelling of the Most Holy Trinity in the souls of the just. This indwelling of the B. Trinity in the soul is substantial; for as God is a spirit He makes His habitation in a spiritual soul as in a temple, according to the words: *Know you not that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God abides in you?* As to the benefits of God: God gives to the just not only His sanctifying grace, but Himself, so that He resides really in the soul as in a living temple, and rejoices it by His presence, and adorns it with His gifts.

The end of this advent of God to the soul is no other than to exercise mercy. For the Holy Trinity comes to the three powers of the soul which it has created to its image that it may purify, renew, and perfect this image which has been stained and injured by many faults and evil habits. The Father sanctifies the memory, the Son the intellect, and the Holy Ghost the will. All this is done in a manner so stable and lasting that their fruit may remain since the Divine persons wish to retain the soul as their dwelling place. Should we not, therefore, endeavour: 1. To sanctify our souls by this Divine Charity in order that they may be worthy tabernacles of the Most Holy Trinity. 2. To keep them free from the slightest sin which might offend the eyes of the Divine Majesty; and, 3, above all to preserve them from grievous sin which would be an abomination in the holy Sanctuary of God according to the words of St. Paul: *What fellowship hath*

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\* Homil 30.

*with darkness? . . . . And what agreement hath the temple  
id with idols? For you are the temple of the living God; as  
saith: I will dwell in them, and walk among them; and I will  
ir God, and they shall be my people.\**

## PART II.

*On Fraternal Charity.*

y Fraternal Charity is meant the virtue of love towards one's  
bour.

enedict XIV., in his treatise on heroic virtue, clearly de-  
what this Charity is. He says:—"In St. John† we read.  
*commandment we have from God, that he who loveth God*  
*also his brother*, from which St. Thomas infers that the habit  
arity does not only pertain to the love of God, but that it  
ds also to the love of one's neighbour.‡ Elsewhere he  
es us§ the reason and the manner of loving our neighbour;  
ason in that from charity we are bound to love others as  
are very close to us, both because of their being made  
ally in the image of God, and because of their being capable  
ry. The manner in that we ought to love our neighbour  
ie sake of God; since it is right to yield to our neighbour in  
but not in evil, just as we should please our own will only  
at is good; and, again, that we ought to love our neigh-  
not for our own profit or pleasure, but in the way we desire  
is good for ourselves."

s to the parts of this virtue the same author continues:  
tain so-called potential parts are assigned to the virtue of  
y, viz., benevolence, beneficence and mercy. But the first  
supernatural aspect is not distinguished from charity, and  
ence implies acts corresponding to benevolence, and so  
d from charity, wherefore mercy alone will be a distinct  
. St. Thomas enquires:|| whether mercy is a virtue? He  
rs that mercy signifies sorrow for another's misery; then,  
as this sorrow is a motion of the sensitive appetite, he says  
mercy is not a virtue but a passion; on the other hand it is  
ue if the motion of the intellectual appetite according to  
anyone who is pained at another's misfortune be governed  
ison.

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lor. vi. 14, 16.

† 1 Ep. iv. 21.

‡ II. 2. Ques. 25, Art. I.

§ II. 2. Ques. 44. Art. 7.

|| II. 2. Ques. 30. Art. 3.

The same doctor teaches that by charity, we being united to God are like to Him, and by a similitude of operation we are also assimilated to God, which takes place by mercy, and he shows that beneficence is an act of charity and not a special virtue.

These extracts explain the nature of fraternal charity as understood in the spiritual life, and also in the sense that it is commanded by God.

The precept of charity towards our neighbour is proved from many parts of the Holy Scriptures. St. Matthew says: "And the second is like to this: *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"\* St. John says: "*A new commandment I give unto you, That you love one another as I have loved you;*"† and *This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you.*"‡ In his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says: "*For he that loveth his neighbour hath fulfilled the law;*"§ and in his Epistle to the Galatians he says the same thing.|| "*For all the law is fulfilled in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*"

We are not only bound to love our neighbour by an *external act*, namely, to help him in necessity but also by an *internal act*, by which we wish him well, and desire good for him, as is proved from the condemnation, by Innocent XI. of the following propositions: "We are not bound to love our neighbour by an internal and formal act." "The precept of loving our neighbour we can satisfy by external acts alone." But to satisfy the strict precept a general love, which excludes no one and embraces all is sufficient. And therefore for its fulfilment the prayer which we offer for all in saying the Lord's Prayer, for example, includes both the internal and external acts of charity towards our neighbour. We should however be always ready and disposed to help in particular our neighbour when he is in want.¶

The Fathers of the Church speak in the same manner of the love of our neighbour. St. Austin says: "He who loves God does what God commands him, and the greater his love, the more perfect his obedience; therefore such a one loves his neighbour because God commands this; and he who loves his neighbour must love also Him who is our chief love, namely, God Himself."

St. Jerome, referring to the words of St. John, exhorting his disciples to charity because it is God's precept, says:

"*For all the law is fulfilled in one word: Thou shalt love thy*

\* xxii. 39. † xiii. 34. ‡ xiii. 34. § xiii. 8. ¶ v. 14.

¶ Haine's Elementa Theologiæ. De Charitate.

neighbour as thyself; and if we observe this we shall have fulfilled the whole law.

The argument from reason is that given by St. Austin, namely, As the charity of God is necessary for our spiritual advancement and salvation, so is charity towards our neighbour without which the charity of God cannot exist.

The principal acts of this virtue are:—

1. To rejoice in our neighbour's spiritual good, that is, in the gifts which they have received from God, or in the good gifts which they may have acquired.
2. To grieve over the evils that befall our neighbour whether spiritual or corporal.
3. To pray for all, especially for our enemies.
4. To labour for our neighbour's salvation, and if necessary to sacrifice our lives for this end.
5. To practise the spiritual, and corporal works of mercy.

The order to be observed in the exercise of this virtue is twofold, concerning things and persons.

Concerning things the order is:—1. Spiritual and supernatural goods. 2. Natural and intrinsic corporal goods such as life, health, etc. 3. Extrinsic natural goods such as a good name, fortune, honour, riches, etc. A good name and honour are of a higher order than fortune and riches, because they are in a sense spiritual and moral. Also, the common good is to be preferred to a private good, inasmuch as the whole is to be esteemed more than a part.

Concerning persons the following is the order established by charity: After God—1. Ourselves. 2. Our neighbour. And amongst the neighbours, the order is, 1. Relations. 2. Strangers. And amongst relations, when they are not in extreme necessity, those to be helped are: 1. The wife in respect to the husband, and the husband in respect to the wife. 2. Children. 3. Parents. 4. Brothers and sisters; and so on. In extreme necessity the parents have to be assisted before all others. They, in such a case, have the first claim inasmuch as they gave us life.

From the foregoing doctrine, and also from the precept of loving our neighbour, the following conclusions may be drawn.

1. The love of our neighbour, which proceeds from the love of God, should be for God's sake or through motives of faith, inasmuch as my neighbour, no less than myself, is a creature and child of God, and redeemed by the precious Blood of Christ, and because fraternal charity is Christ's precept: *This is My precept, that you love one another.*



2. If the motive of Faith be absent, then our love for our neighbour will be merely human friendship and unstable, or a friendship that is injurious or dangerous, according to the words of St. James: *Know you not that the friendship of this world is the enemy of God? Whosoever, therefore, will be a friend of this world becometh an enemy of God.*

3. The rule to guide us in the love of our neighbour is that given in the precept, namely, *sicut teipsum*, "as thyself." This is the measure of the love of our neighbour, but it is a measure of similitude, not of quantity or equality. The precept does not say: "love your neighbour as much as yourself;" but love him as yourself, that is, with the same kind and motive of love as that with which you love yourself. Because the order of nature and of charity requires that you love yourself more than your neighbour. We should, therefore, inflict no injury on our neighbour that we are unwilling to suffer ourselves, and we should wish good to them in the same manner as we desire it for ourselves. If you desire to know whether you love your neighbour you must consider the effects of your charity in word and deed, that is, what do you say or do, what do you spend or suffer, what do you bear and pardon, through the motive of charity? Practically, to love our neighbour as ourselves means: 1. Not to do him any injury, either in thought, word, or deed. 2. To wish good to him, and procure it for him. 3. To pardon injuries, and to bear with his defects and shortcomings.\*

After explaining this virtue and its obligations in general, I wish now to speak of it as it should exist in a particular manner in a Religious Community.

To such as live together in Religion may be applied the words of Holy David:† *Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity.*

The bonds of union are numerous and very strong in the Religious life. We have the same obligations, the same laws, the same Superiors, the same manner of life. These things alone should unite us in friendship and charity. But when we think of the end in view, and the means to that end, then it is that we can fully realize our obligation and the necessity of this virtue.

SS. Basil and Austin, speaking of charity, with reference to the moral body of a Religious Community, explain it by the metaphor of the human body. All the parts of the human body

\* Schouppe's Evangelia, 12 and 17 Dom. Post. Pent.

† Ps. cxxxii. 1.

are so united and arranged as to fit each in its right place ; there is sympathy amongst all its members which makes them all rejoice, as it were, when all are well ; the head, eyes, hands, and feet, and the entire body, rejoices and feels at peace when no discord or pain finds its way into their midst ; but let one member, even the little finger, be in pain and at variance with the others, and then there is no peace, but the whole body is suffering. So is it with the moral body, when there is one discordant element there can be no peace in the rest ; and on the other hand, when all are united and sound at heart concord and happiness reign throughout the whole body or community.

Fraternal charity is that virtue which makes us rejoice with those who rejoice, and be sad with those who are in grief: *Gaudete cum gaudentibus flete cum flentibus*. Rejoice in recreation with the others ; rejoice at the virtues and good qualities you see in your companions ; rejoice also at the esteem in which they are held by others. Mourn with them in their troubles ; grieve with them over their imperfections, or at least give them comfort and encouragement in the time of trial. From this good disposition arises that sympathy which inclines us to congratulate our companions in their joys, and to console and comfort them in their sorrows.

Fraternal charity makes us also dependent on each other in a certain way, in Religion. St. Paul writing to the Corinthians\* says : *That the eye cannot say to the hand, I need not thy help : nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you*. In Religion one performs the office of head, another of the eyes, another of the hands and feet and so on. Charity effects that the head will never say to the hands, nor the hands to the feet, "I do not need your assistance"—"you are in no way necessary." It also makes Religious serve and assist each other in a joyful and loving manner. Finally, fraternal charity is the love of our neighbour, especially of our Sisters in Religion, which results from the love of Jesus Christ. It is the fruit of the Spirit of God as declared by St. Paul, and in his Epistle to the Corinthians he thus speaks of it.† *Charity is patient, is kind ; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up. Is not ambitious, seeketh not her own, is not provoked to anger, thinketh no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth with the truth. Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth away : whether prophecies shall be made void or tongues*

\* 1 Cor. xiii. 4 et seq.

† 1 Cor. xiii. 21.

*shall cease, or knowledge shall be destroyed.* Each of these expressions affords matter for a meditation or an examen. Especially I would call attention to the expressions: *Charity beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.* Would that we all could have that strong belief and trust in each other that charity dictates! All of us wear the same habit of Religion, all are bound by the same ties, and tend to the same end. Let us not easily distrust each other, or entertain doubts about the sincerity of our fellow-Religious. Those who do not trust others are mostly deceived, but those who follow the advice of the Apostle, believing in all and trusting all never are, and never will be deceived by good Religious. Even though Superiors and others may sometimes be led astray and misplace their trust, it is far better that this should sometimes happen, than that pain be ever caused to a virtuous and well-meaning Religious by doubting her fidelity and trustworthiness. So that, a system of offensive espionage is one of the greatest obstacles to charity that could find its way into a Religious Community. To speak clearly on this subject, I think it necessary to refer to the more direct action of charity in a community, namely, that of *fraternal correction*.

By *fraternal correction* is meant an admonition given through charity to our neighbour for the amendment of his life. It is different from judicial correction, because this is exercised by public authority, but fraternal correction is from private authority; the *judicial* is for the public good, and is an act of justice; the *fraternal* is for the private good of the individual, and is an act of charity.

We are obliged to help our neighbour, and especially our Sisters in Religion, in this respect. This obligation arises from the natural law, which binds us to help our neighbour in his corporal necessities, and much more in a case of spiritual necessity. It is also ordered by the Divine positive law according to the words of St. Matthew. *But if thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone.* The *thee* means with your knowledge or in your presence. Certain conditions are required in order that the obligation of fraternal correction may bind, because it is a painful duty to give a correction, and sometimes a very painful humiliation to receive one, especially when it is not accompanied with the requisite conditions. These are:—1. That the sin of our neighbour is quite certain, so that it is not sufficient when one has only a suspicion or doubt about the matter; or has information only from public

tumour, for this is often false and sometimes groundless, especially as evil tongues do not scruple to attack even those consecrated to God. 2. That there be a well-founded hope and probability of the emendation of the delinquent, because no one is obliged to do a useless work, especially if it be also unpleasant. 3. That the correction be deemed necessary for the amendment of the guilty party. That is when you cannot prudently suppose that the person has a good conscience, and is very likely to be the first to correct the fault by repentance and confession. 4. That it can be done without a grave inconvenience. 5. That it be given at an opportune time. Hence it can, and sometimes ought to be deferred, in a case where, as St. Francis de Sales says, the person is not disposed to digest the food, for correction is a species of diet, hard to be digested, unless sweetened by gentleness and compassion.

These are the conditions required for fraternal correction, and much greater is the reason for attending to them in the case of judicial correction:—

Attention should be paid to the above conditions and especially to the fact that the fault should be something serious, and that the delinquent has not corrected herself; because, I believe that many Religious are under the impression that for the purpose of correction they should report every trifling fault and failing they see in their companions to Superiors, to the great injury of their neighbour's character. It should, therefore, be remembered that the obligation of telling the faults of others to Superiors, is ordained and permitted only for a twofold object, namely, for the amendment of the offender, and for the keeping up of regular discipline in the Community. By reason of this second part, that is, the preservation of regular discipline, it is taught that when through venial sins the observance would be very seriously injured, or destroyed altogether in a Community, then Superiors would be obliged through charity, to avert this great evil, and not only the Superior would be obliged to this, but each of the Religious would be bound to help in applying the necessary remedy.

Religious therefore are obliged:—1. To manifest any abuse that endangers the regular discipline. 2. To make known the fault of a Sister when they cannot correct it themselves, and when the Sister is not likely to amend. 3. In case of a scandal that people know, and that ought not to go without punishment, correction should be given and punishment inflicted whether there is hope of amendment or not; but this case belongs rather to the judicial exercise of power than to fraternal

charity. 4. A local Superior is not justified in making known the faults of her subjects to higher Superiors when she can correct them herself. In all that has been said, we must remember that Superiors need not always be regarded as judges, but that we can speak to them as to spiritual parents; that they can often make use of the most charitable means to gain an erring subject; and that they are bound to exhaust all the means of fraternal correction, as Dr. Moriarty says in his Allocution on this subject, before they have recourse to judicial correction. The order to be observed in fraternal correction is prescribed by our Divine Lord in the Gospel of St. Matthew.\* 1. That it is to be done privately, *corripe eum in'er te et ipsum solum*. 2. If this does not suffice, bring one or two witnesses, *si te non audiet adhibe tecum unum aut duos*. 3. If no improvement follows from that, mention it to the Superior, *dic Ecclesiæ*. The reason of this order is, that charity and justice require that a person be corrected with the least possible injury to his good name. This order has sometimes to be inverted, and especially in the following cases:—1. When the sin is public, or likely to become so, then, to avert the scandal, it should at once be told to the Superior. 2. If it be pernicious to the Community, because the public good is to be preferred to the private good of an individual. 3. If a secret correction is unlikely to be of any use. 4. If the correction can be better managed by bringing the fault first before the Superior, then, according to St. Thomas, it ought not to be regarded as telling the Church, but as telling one who can better obtain the improvement of your neighbour than you can do yourself. 5. If the person has ceded his own right to be privately corrected, as is the case in some Religious Orders, particularly amongst the Jesuits, as is clear from the treatise on Fraternal Correction, by Rodriguez. The rule spoken of by Rodriguez, that obliges the Religious presently to discover to Superiors the faults of their brethren, does not apply to any Religious Order or Congregation of women, and where there is no particular rule on the point, Religious cannot be said to have ceded their right in this matter, and we have to follow in fraternal correction, the common law and teaching as explained above. I may here mention some of the faults against charity that are calculated to destroy the peace of a Religious Community.

I need not speak of hatred which is a crime of such a nature that it does not often find its way into the soul of a Religious.

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\* Chap xvii.

Anger is the next grade of vice which is opposed to charity; and it is a strong passion in human nature. Cardinal Cajetan, in his notes on the Summa of St. Thomas,\* gives us three grades of this vice on which we may examine ourselves.

The first grade, which he calls *acute*, is to get angry on a sudden, and for very slight reasons. The second he calls *amarus*, or bitter, which lasts some time, either on account of the continuance of the cause or the remembrance of it. The third, which he calls *difficult* or *grave*, is that which seeks revenge, or to inflict an injury.

We have an example of the first in the prophet Jonas who was angry because of an ivy leaf;† also in the first Book of Kings,‡ where Saul rebukes Jonathan so suddenly and severely because he interceded for David. We have an example of the second kind of anger in the case of king Achab, who when he was refused the vineyard by Naboth,§ he became angry, and showed his anger in the following manner: *And Achab came into his house angry and fretting, because of the word that Naboth the Jezrahelite had spoken to him saying: I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And casting himself upon his bed, he turned away his face to the wall and would eat no bread.* An example of the third grade of anger is related in the first book of Kings.|| When Saul had heard of the great victory of David he became very angry, and as the Scripture says: *Saul did not look on David with a good eye from that day forward.* This is the grave anger in which there is grievous sin: that by which we wish evil to another and seek revenge. We have to guard against this vice in all its grades, for if it be allowed to enter into a Community its effects would soon be felt, and we know the nature of these effects. They are: 1. In the heart (*in corde*), indignation and worthless esteem for others. 2. In the mind (*tumor mentis*), the destruction of peace. 3. In speech (*in ore*), offensive and contumelious words. 4. In deed (*in opere*), quarrels and disagreements.

Father Faber gives us the following notes on fraternal charity.

1. If you are fidgeted by their (the Sisters') peculiarities, they are equally fidgeted by yours.
2. Because they are more popular than you, humility should teach you they deserve it.
3. Superiors use and repose more confidence in them; they know best; here obedience will help you as well as humility.

\* I. 2 Ques. 46, Art. 8.

† Chap. iv.

‡ 1 Kings, xx. 30.

§ 3 Kings, xxi. 4.

|| Ch. xviii. v. 9.

4. Besides, you have exaggerated it all by talking, or by judging it in thought.

5. Moreover, if all this be true, the love of you by others is as true; and the love of our Blessed Lord is worth more than all.

The same author suggests some helps for the preservation of harmony in a Community. These are:—1. Often reflect on some good point in each of your Sisters. 2. And on the opposite faults in yourself. 3. On your little progress in that virtue or grade of virtue. 4. To do so most in the case of those whom we are most inclined to criticise. 5. Never to claim rights or even to let ourselves feel that we have them: the spirit of rights is a most fatal spirit, both as to obedience and charity. 6. Charitable thoughts are the only security of charitable deeds and words: they save us from surprises, especially from surprises of temper.

Then there are the degrees of charity in the soul to be considered:—1. Never to have an aversion for another, and much less to manifest it. The matter of human likes and dislikes is often very troublesome and unintelligible. Sometimes we dislike people we have never seen. Sometimes those who are successful; who have eclipsed ourselves at any duty. Many dislike a person who can do nothing better than themselves; and there are others to whom any success, any excellence, any good quality in or good work done by their companions, will be regarded as defective in motive, if in nothing else, and they will almost take it even as a personal offence. 2. To avoid all particular friendships. These are very injurious to the peace and harmony of a Community. 3. Never to judge another, and always if possible to excuse the faults we see, and if we cannot excuse the action let us excuse the intention. We cannot all think alike, and we should therefore avoid attributing bad motives to others. We should more especially try to think kindly and feelingly of those who are in error. Let us imagine ourselves in their place, and consider their prejudices, their temptations and their cares, and bear in mind that it might perhaps be too much for us were we situated as they are. I might go on for ever enumerating the degrees of charity in the soul, because they are numbered according to the degrees of grace; because every degree of grace has a corresponding degree of charity, and as the degrees of grace are innumerable, so are the degrees of this virtue. Grace and charity, though not the same thing, are inseparable gifts. Where the one is the other must be; where there is much grace there is much charity; where there is little grace there is little charity; *and where there is no charity there is no grace.*

Let us then represent to ourselves a really charitable Religious, one who has in her heart true sisterly affection for her companions in Religion.

I see in such a one an utter disregard of self ; and a desire to accommodate others. She rejoices with her companions in their joys and recreations, and grieves with them in their afflictions. She tries to bring all the good she can to the Community, and to avert all the evil, and she begins with herself by being as little trouble as possible to others. With what charity and affability does she bear with the faults and shortcomings of others, careful to fulfil the law of Christ, which tells us to bear one another's burdens. She dispenses to others what she has for her own advantage, more particularly she gives her spiritual assistance by prayer and the other spiritual works of mercy. She never contradicts anyone : never speaks against anybody, and never judges anybody ; she is convinced that charity, holy friendship and concord, form the only solace of this life. She is convinced also that no good ever came from dissensions or disputes. She considers that God is always in the midst of those who live united together by the bonds of His holy love.

It may be thought that I am endeavouring to picture a soul already in heaven, and not a poor creature of this earth. Yes, that is what we should picture to ourselves when speaking of charity, and not simply the image or representation of a beatified soul, but of God Himself. That image of God will be still more impressed upon our souls the more we have the charity of Christ in our hearts ; the charity of Him who has commanded us to love one another as He has loved us.

This charity we certainly shall have if we consider the image of God in the souls of our companions. They are the children of God, made to His own image and likeness ; they are the spouses of Christ, and the Temples of the Holy Ghost. Let us not so much regard external behaviour, but let us enter into the interior soul and see there the supernatural virtues of faith, hope, and charity. Let us consider all their other virtues, and the graces which God has bestowed upon them. Their souls are consecrated to God by Religious profession. They are His, and therefore we should reverence and love them. We should also bear in mind how God has regarded each one of us : how He has never grown tired of us, no matter what our faults and sins may have been. He has borne with us so patiently, and He wishes us all to imitate Him, to bear with one another, and to be united in loving Him, and in tending towards Heaven our



common home and final resting place, where entirely free from every fault we hope to be united with them, and to have them as our future companions. As we form one body here, and one spirit in the same faith and charity, let us hope not to be separated hereafter, but to belong for ever to that one body in heaven, when faith and hope and prophecy and words shall disappear, but where Charity alone shall remain and remain for ever.

**THE END.**

COMMENTARY  
On the Decree *Quemadmodum*.

AS A

SUPPLEMENT TO "CONVENT LIFE."

**Nihil obstat.**

EDMUNDUS SURMONT, S.T.D.

**Imprimatur.**

HERBERTUS CARDINALIS VAUGHAN,  
ARCHIEP. WESTMONAST.

*In festo Omnium Sanctorum.*

1896.

COMMENTARY  
On the Decree *Quemadmodum*,  
OF THE  
Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars  
ON  
MANIFESTATION OF CONSCIENCE,  
HOLY COMMUNION,  
And EXTRAORDINARY CONFESSORS,  
BY THE  
REV. FR. ARTHUR DEVINE,  
PASSIONIST,  
*Author of "Convent Life," "The Creed Explained," etc.*



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## NOTICE.

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1. The following "Commentary" may be added as a Supplement to "Convent Life," and although intended chiefly for Superiors and Confessors, it contains instructions that affect the individual members of Religious Communities, who may read it to their advantage.

2. When writing it I have had to consult the works of the best authors available who treat of the duties and obligations of the Religious state, and I have followed their teaching in the interpretation of the eight articles of the Decree. Sometimes I have been able to refer to the authoritative interpretation of the lawgiver as given by the more recent decisions of the Holy See, in answers to doubts and difficulties proposed to the Sacred Congregation in 1891-92. These decisions are authoritative and have themselves the force of law.

3. The doctrinal interpretation given by Theologians and Canonists of the laws of the Church and the Decrees of the Pope, though always worthy of esteem and respect, need not always be adhered to and may occasionally admit of divergent opinions; on this account I have endeavoured, as a rule, to avoid disputed points, and to state definitely only those conclusions which all can safely adopt and follow in practice.

4. The "Commentary" has been carefully examined by eminent Theologians, to whose advice and observation I am much indebted; and I therefore publish it with confidence, and with an earnest wish that it may be useful to the Religious for whom it is intended; and that priests charged with the spiritual care of Convents and Religious Communities, may find it a great help and a guide to them in their ministrations.



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## TEXT OF DECREE.

*(Official Translation.)*

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AS all human things, however good and holy in themselves, may by the abuse of men be turned to an unfit or improper use, so also laws, however wisely they may be drawn up ; and therefore it sometimes happens, that they cease to attain their object, and even produce an effect contrary to what was intended.

This, it must be acknowledged with regret, has happened in regard to the laws of many Congregations, Societies, and Institutes, both of women taking simple or solemn vows, and of men who in their profession and government are laymen. Thus, the manifestation of conscience, which was sometimes permitted by their Constitutions, in order that the members might more easily be trained by experienced Superiors, in the difficult way of perfection, has by some Superiors been turned into a searching examination of conscience, such as belongs only to the Sacrament of Penance. In like manner, their Constitutions prescribed, in accordance with the Sacred Canons, that Sacramental Confession should be made in these Communities to their ordinary and extraordinary Confessors ; but some Superiors have gone so far as to refuse an extraordinary Confessor to their subjects, even when for the good of their conscience they stood much in need of one. Lastly, it was left to the discretion of Superiors, to direct their subjects aright in the use of special penances and other works of piety ; but some of them have so far abused this power as to permit or even altogether to forbid their going to Holy Com-

munion, just as they chose. The consequence has been that these regulations, which had been wisely laid down for the spiritual advancement of the members, and for the maintenance and increase of peace and concord in the Community, have not unfrequently caused danger to souls, anxiety of conscience, and disturbance of peace, as is clearly proved by the appeals and complaints made by subjects to the Holy See on every side.

Wherefore, Our Holy Father Pope Leo XIII., out of special solicitude for this most chosen portion of his flock, in an audience granted to me, the Cardinal Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on the 14th day of December, 1890, after carefully weighing everything, has willed, determined, and decreed as follows :—

I. His Holiness annuls, abolishes, and declares of no force in future, all regulations contained in the Constitutions of pious Societies and Institutes, both of women with simple or solemn vows, and also of laymen—even though the aforesaid Constitutions may have been approved by the Holy See, and in the form which is called “most special,”—so far as they relate in any way, or under any name, to the manifestation of the inward heart and conscience. He therefore lays upon the Superiors, whether men or women, of such Institutes, Congregations, and Societies, the grave obligation of completely cancelling and erasing in their Constitutions, Directories, and Manuals, the regulations aforesaid. He likewise annuls and cancels all usages and customs whatsoever to the aforesaid effect, even though they may be immemorial.

II. His Holiness, moreover, strictly forbids the Superiors aforesaid, whether men or women, of whatsoever rank or dignity, to endeavour, directly or indirectly, by precept, counsel, fear, threats, or any kind of enticement, to induce their subjects to make such manifestation of conscience to them. He commands

all subjects to denounce to their chief Superiors any Superiors of a lower degree who dare to induce them to do this; and if it should be the Superior-General, whether man or woman, the denunciation must be made to this Sacred Congregation.

III. This, however, by no means hinders subjects from opening their minds to their Superiors freely and of their own accord, for the purpose of obtaining from their prudence, in doubt and anxiety, advice and direction for acquiring virtue and making progress in perfection.

IV. Moreover, without interfering with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent in regard to the ordinary and extraordinary Confessors of Communities (*Sess. 25, Cap. 10, de Regularibus*), or with what is laid down by Pope Benedict XIV. (in his Constitution *Pastoralis curae*) his Holiness admonishes all Prelates and Superiors to grant an extraordinary Confessor to their subjects as often as for conscience sake they are constrained to ask for one; and to do this without in any way enquiring the reason of the request or showing displeasure. And lest this prudent regulation should be without lasting effect, his Holiness exhorts all Ordinaries to appoint in places of their Dioceses where there are Communities of Women, suitable Priests with faculties, to whom they may easily have recourse for the Sacrament of Penance.

V. With regard to the permission or prohibition of Holy Communion, His Holiness decrees that such permissions or prohibitions belong only to the Confessor, ordinary or extraordinary; and that Superiors have no authority to interfere in this matter, except in the case of a subject, who, since the last Sacramental Confession, has given scandal to the Community, or has committed some grave external fault—in which case Holy Communion may be forbidden until the person has again been to the Sacrament of Penance.

VI. All, therefore, are admonished to prepare themselves dilligently, and to go to Holy Communion on the days appointed by their rules; and whenever, by reason of the fervour and spiritual progress of any one, the Confessor shall judge more frequent Communion expedient, the Confessor himself shall be able to permit it. But whoever obtains from the Confessor leave for more frequent or even daily Communion, shall be bound to make it known to the Superior; and a Superior who thinks that there are just and grave reasons against such frequent Communion, must declare the same to the Confessor, whose judgment shall be final.

VII. His Holiness moreover commands all General, Provincial, and Local Superiors, of the Institutes above-mentioned, whether of men or of women, dilligently and carefully to observe all the regulations of this Decree, under the penalties to be incurred *ipso facto* by Superiors who disobey the mandates of the Apostolic See.

VIII. Lastly, His Holiness commands that copies of this Decree, translated into the vernacular, be inserted in the Constitutions of the aforesaid pious Institutes; and that at least once a year, in each house, at a fixed time, either at the public table or in a Chapter specially called for this purpose, they be read in a loud and clear voice.

His Holiness has thus determined and decreed, all things whatsoever contrary thereto, even if worthy of special mention, notwithstanding.

Given at Rome, from the Secretary's Office of the aforesaid Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, on the 17th day of December, 1890.

ISIDORE CARDINAL VIRGA, Prefect.

✠ Fr. ALOYSIUS, Bp. of Callinicum, Secretary.

# COMMENTARY

## On the Decree *Quemadmodum*.

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### INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

1.—This Decree is dated the 17th December, 1890. It was issued from the office of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, and signed by the Cardinal Prefect of the Congregation, and by the Secretary of the same Congregation.

It was afterwards translated into the vernacular and published by the Bishops throughout the world, and copies sent to the various Convents of nuns and Lay Communities of men. It has, therefore, the force of law, and is binding on all those whom it concerns, namely, all those referred to by the Decree itself.

This Decree has all the conditions required for a new law, namely:—1. It has been not only approved by the Sovereign Pontiff, but published and promulgated by His command. 2. To it was attached the seal of the Sacred Congregation and the signature of the Cardinal Prefect, and of the Secretary. 3. It has been sufficiently promulgated. A Decree that has these three conditions has the force of law, and faithful obedience is due to it, just as if it emanated immediately from the Pope himself.

The decrees or declarations of the Sacred Congregation are of two kinds:—1. *Declarationes extensivæ*, i.e., those which extend as it were, or stretch the meaning of words beyond their ordinary signification, and grant or prohibit something accordingly. These decisions, as they form new laws, do not obtain the force of law unless they are issued by the special order of the Pope and properly promulgated. The Sacred Congregation by its institution has the power of interpreting but not of making laws.

2. *Declarationes Comprehensivæ*, i.e., those that do not depart

from the ordinary sense of the words of the law; and which therefore, are mere explanations of, but not additions to, the law. These have always the force of universal law and are retro-active, and do not require a special promulgation. This Decree is of the first kind in the fullest sense, as it abrogates old laws and customs as well as gives new ones for the better government of Religious Communities. It is a Constitution or Apostolic letter, which ordains in a permanent manner regulations for the better government of Religious Communities. It therefore requires to be promulgated before it can be said to be of obligation, and should it happen that its promulgation has not been duly made to any particular Convent or Community, these cannot be said to be as yet bound by its ordinances.

2.—Those to whom the Decree extends, or those that are bound by it are clearly made known, namely:—1. All nuns, whether with solemn vows or with simple vows. 2. All communities of laymen, that is of Brothers whose Institutes are not in their nature and government wholly ecclesiastical, such as the Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Marist Brothers, Xaverian Brothers, the Brothers of St. Patrick, the Presentation Brothers, &c. It does not refer to Lay Brothers in Institutes whose government is ecclesiastical, as for example the Lay Brothers of the Society of Jesus, of the Passionists, or of the various Orders, Dominican, Franciscan, Benedictine, &c. These Congregations and Orders are in their nature and government ecclesiastical, and, therefore, the Decree does not affect them or their Rules. At the same time, I may remark that according to the spirit of the Decree, even in these Institutes, the manifestation of conscience should not be exacted out of Confession. Such a manifestation out of confession is not prescribed as binding by any approved Rule of any ecclesiastical body (although regulations and customs to that effect have existed and have been tolerated), not even by the Rule of St. Ignatius, in which the manifestation is regarded as of so much moment for preserving the spirit of the Institute. Fr. Aquaviva, General of the Society of Jesus, after having pointed out the difference that is between the account of conscience and Confession, and after having said that each one may, if he pleases, give an account of conscience in Confession, adds: *Since, therefore, we ought not to constrain our Religious to give an account of conscience out of Confession, because the Constitutions leave us entire liberty herein for each one's*

*particular comfort ; yet we ought to praise those who, excepting the things that belong properly to Confession, and which they may afterwards discover to their Superiors in Confession, give an account of their conscience out of Confession, and who let themselves be seen to the bottom, that the Superiors, not being constrained in any respect whatsoever, may freely make use of this knowledge for the advantage of their direction and the greater glory of God.* (Rodriguez, Christian Perfection. 7th Treatise, X. ch. 10.)

3.—From this extract it appears that the account of conscience out of Confession is not of obligation in the Society of Jesus ; and the same may be said of all other Institutes, whether ecclesiastical or lay.

I have stated that this Decree has the force of law. It is an ecclesiastical law and has the same binding power as any other law of the Church. As such, all the Religious whom it concerns are strictly bound to obey it, but the question may arise as to whether Religious are bound to obey it *vi voti obedientiæ*, by virtue of the vow of obedience. It is quite certain that they are not bound *vi voti* to observe the general laws of the Church. Their vow of obedience does not extend to all of them, but only to those which at their profession they promise to obey, namely, those precepts that are according to their Rules and Constitutions. Religious by their vow only promise to obey lawful Superiors in everything which they may command or forbid according to the Rules. And it may be asked, are they bound by their vow to obey this Decree ? This, I think, is an important question, because it involves the further question as to whether a Religious would be guilty of the sin of sacrilege by disobedience to any of its precepts. We cannot hold a Religious guilty of breaking his vow, and of sacrilege by disobeying the general laws of the Church, as for example, by eating meat on Friday or by not hearing Mass on Sunday ; nor the Rule itself, unless it binds under grave sin. Have we to regard the provisions and the particular precepts contained in this Decree in this light ? I think not, for the following reasons : according to Busenbaum and others, Religious are bound to observe those precepts that are ordained for the better observance of their Rule, even when they only indirectly appertain to the Rule, especially if they be in things that are very necessary for the observance of the Rule, and the preservation of the Spirit of the Institute, or the correction of abuses (Apud S. Alphonsum, De Statu, Religioso, lib. 5, n.



39-43.) And again, it is commonly taught that General and Provincial Chapters may make some new statutes obligatory *vi voti* on their Religious subjects, provided these statutes be in accordance with the Rule or reducible to it, or in some way contained in it; now, if these Chapters can make such statutes *a fortiori* the Supreme Pontiff can also enjoin new laws and precepts binding Religious *vi voti obedientiæ*. The present Decree has Pontifical authority. It is ordained to correct abuses in Communities. It is for the better observance of the Rules of the various Institutes. It is ordered to be embodied with the Rules which the Religious of these Institutes have professed, and it would therefore seem that its precepts are obligatory *vi voti obedientiæ*, and disobedience to them would involve the sin of sacrilege, inasmuch as it would be a violation of the vow. (See Bouix de Jure Regularium. Pars Sexta. Quæ. III., vol. II. page 415.)

4.—*The Decree* begins by making known the reasons which led to its publication, namely, the abuses which existed in some Communities with regard to the manifestations of conscience; refusing extraordinary Confessors when required by the Religious subjects; and forbidding their going to Communion as a penance and as the Superiors chose.

It can be neither useful nor necessary now to quote examples to show how far these abuses had found their way into some Convents. It can serve no purpose, and, in fact, the enumeration of such examples would not be to edification. We know that they existed; that by some Superiors and Rev. Mothers the manifestation of conscience was abused to the extent, that subjects were asked and required to answer questions, that strictly belonged to the tribunal of penance; and that the examination on delicate subjects to which they were subjected was, in some instances, far more searching and minute than would be necessary for a good Confession. Instances of many appeals to the Holy See in cases of refusal of extraordinary Confessors might also be quoted; and, in which the Holy See decided, as it invariably did, in favour of the subjects, and against the Superiors. As to forbidding Communion as a penance for trifling faults, it seems unintelligible how it ever came into practice against the clear teaching of Theology, with regard to persons, who are to be denied Communion. Yet such an abuse found its way into convents, and it not unfrequently happened that Religious

for a small fault were commanded to abstain not only one day from Communion, but for a week or longer, as a penance.

"The consequence has been," in the words of the Decree, "that the regulations which have been wisely laid down for the spiritual advancement of the members, and for the maintenance and increase of peace and concord in the Community have, not unfrequently, caused danger to souls, anxiety of conscience, and disturbance of peace, as is clearly proved by the appeals and complaints made by subjects to the Holy See on every side."

With these introductory remarks, I may now proceed to comment on the provisions and enactments determined by the Decree. These are eight in number, which may be classed under eight sections or paragraphs, and which I can treat of separately: giving first the text of the Decree, and afterwards giving its explanation, and stating the extent of its obligation.

#### SECTION I.—ABROGATION OF REGULATIONS AND CUSTOMS.

*His Holiness annuls, abolishes, and declares of no force in future, all regulations contained in the Constitutions of pious Societies and Institutes, both of women with simple or solemn vows, and also laymen, even though the aforesaid Constitutions may have been approved by the Holy See, and in the form which is called "most special," so far as they relate in any way, or under any name, to the manifestation of the inward heart and conscience. He, therefore, lays upon the Superiors, whether men or women of such Institutes, Congregations and Societies, the grave obligation of completely cancelling and erasing in their Constitutions, Directories, and Manuals, the regulations aforesaid. He likewise annuls and cancels all usages and customs whatsoever to the aforesaid effect, even though they may be immemorial.*

1.—Two kinds of manifestation of conscience have been practised in Religious Communities, the one public, called *culpa*, which is usually made in Chapter or in the Refectory in the presence of the Religious Community. The other private and secret, made to the Superior.

The *culpa* or public manifestation, or accusation of faults is not forbidden by this Decree, and the regulations concerning it are not abrogated or affected in any way by it. The custom, then, still prevails in most Communities, I may say in all, that the

Religious should make a public acknowledgment of their faults against the Rule, and receive a penance from the Superior. This avowal of faults is to be made, as I have said, in the presence of the assembled Community, either in Chapter or in the Refectory, according as the Rule may prescribe. The accusation must only be of the external faults contrary to Rule, such as not mortifying the eyes, tongue, and other senses. It does not oblige except in the sense in which the Rule itself is obligatory. It serves as an opportunity of exercising humility, and often as an easy and efficacious means of correcting faults and imperfections. This accusation is personal, and to be made by the Religious themselves, and they must never accuse one another at this public Chapter or *culpa* unless this be approved by the Rules and the customs of the Order. This *culpa* is observed once a week in very many Communities, and the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars prescribes it once a month for an Institute mentioned in the fifty-fourth number of the *Analecta Juris Pontificis*. (Col. 2070. n. 12.)

The manifestation or account of Conscience<sup>1</sup> that is annulled by this Decree is the *private manifestation of conscience* that some Religious were required to make to the Superior either once a month or oftener. For some years past the Sacred Congregation has disapproved of this manifestation, and in 1790 in giving its approbation to the Constitutions of the Passionist nuns in Italy, it modified the article on the account of conscience by adding, that if any Religious should have a difficulty in making it to the Mother Superior, she might make it to the Confessor.

In the year 1854, when the Constitutions of a certain Congregation were submitted for approbation, the Consultor or Procurator of the Sacred Congregation in making known certain corrections or emendations which had been agreed upon by the assembly of Cardinals, made observations to the following effect relative to the manifestation of conscience: "The Constitutions prescribe that every Wednesday all the Sisters, in each house, shall present themselves before the Superior, and kneeling down shall manifest their imperfections, their faults contrary to Rules, their interior troubles, and in a word shall make known the depths of their soul, etc." "I cannot," he said, "approve of this account being made in secret. It resembles too much Sacramental Confession and it might be censured as a false mysticism. Besides, this practise might become very dangerous for the consciences of many, as it would easily lead to interior

troubles, to scruples and to sins. I am aware that the account of conscience is prescribed by other Constitutions; but, I know, also, that it has always called forth and given place to very serious remarks on the part of the Sacred Congregation."

In 1860 the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars in its observations on the Constitutions of a certain Institute of Sisters, said: "That on account of the abuses that had crept in, the Sacred Congregation at the present day will not approve of the manifestation of conscience being made to a Rev. Mother or Mother Superior, but it only permits the Sisters, if they wish to do so, to make known their defects as regards the Rule and their progress in virtue; but of other faults and sins they must deal only with their Confessor. (Analæcta, lib. XXXVIII., col. 2396, n. 4.)

The Sacred Congregation would never approve of the manifestation being made in writing; and, of late years it disapproved of the oral manifestation except with regard to the public transgression of Rule, and progress in virtue, and it has invariably cancelled or struck out this regulation from the Constitutions submitted to it of late years for approbation. (Ibid. lib. XLII., col. 510, n. 7.)

Communities might therefore have been well prepared for the Decree of 1890 which has settled the question once for all, and which admits of no loop-hole or means of escape from its precept. As is clear from its distinct and emphatic words: *It annuls, abolishes, and declares of no force all regulations . . . so far as they relate in any way or under any name, to the manifestation of the inward heart and conscience.*

Furthermore, it lays upon the Superiors, the grave obligation of completely cancelling and erasing in their Constitutions, Directories, and Manuals, the regulations aforesaid. This, by its very wording, contains a distinct command binding under a grave obligation, and by this time it should have been complied with by all Superiors. It affects Generals, Provincials, and local Superiors. The manner of cancelling and erasing is left to their own choice. They may either tear out the leaves containing the regulations and burn them; or they may paste them together, or draw a pen across them in such a way that all may know that they are no longer permissible, but cancel and erase them they must under pain of sin; and in the new editions of Constitutions, Directories, or Manuals they must be entirely omitted. It is not sufficient that the Religious know that they are no longer

binding, or a note to that effect would not be sufficient; they must be obliterated and cancelled in some way according to the words of the precept, and that as I have said under a grave obligation. Then, lest any should claim the right to sustain such a manifestation by reason of custom and long usage, which is always sufficient to establish a law, the Decree *annuls and cancels also all usages and customs whatsoever to the aforesaid effect, even though they may be immemorial.*

## SECTION II.—THE PROHIBITION AFFECTING SUPERIORS AND THE DENUNCIATION.

*His Holiness, moreover, strictly forbids the Superiors aforesaid, whether men or women, of whatsoever rank or dignity, to endeavour, directly or indirectly, by precept, counsel, fear, threats, or any kind of enticement, to induce their subject to make manifestation of conscience to them. He commands all subjects to denounce to their chief Superiors any Superiors of a lower degree who dare to induce them to do this; and if it should be the Superior General, whether man or woman, the denunciation must be made to the Sacred Congregation.*

We have here a clear case when subjects can refuse to obey. None of the Superiors to whom this Article refers, can after this, command directly or indirectly any of their subjects to make a manifestation of conscience, or to reveal a matter of conscience, as, for example, what they have said to their Confessor or Director; or what he has said to them; or should subjects have to consult a priest about some matter of conscience and the Superiors endeavour afterwards to make them reveal what it was about and to tell either themselves or a Mother General; in such cases, the Religious can refuse to obey. Superiors have no longer the right to exact such a revelation which would clearly come under the manifestation forbidden by the Holy See. Such precepts are to be regarded as contrary to Rule and contrary to the higher authority of the Church and of the Holy See. A case of a direct precept, counsel or threat in this matter may easily be detected. It is not so easy to discover when the endeavours are made indirectly. Novices and young Religious, are, as a rule, timid and weak, and advantage should not be taken of this tenderness, to lead them to make known their secret faults. Such a mean advantage ought to be reprobated in the strongest manner and

just punishment ought to be inflicted on any Superior that would make use of it. There may be some in a Community, who, through conscientious motives, might wish of their own accord to make the manifestation to the Superior; and occasionally, an odd one might be found here and there who would talk to a Superior about her interior, her difficulties and temptations, in order to gain the favour of the Superior or to be in her good graces. In this a shrewd Superior may easily detect a species of hypocrisy, and may hesitate as to the judgment she may form about the interior state of that soul from the knowledge received. There will be others and the greater number who will have no inclination for any such manifestation outside confession. In these cases, a Superior should show no predilection for the former and place no more confidence in them than in the latter. They should not treat these with any marked coldness, nor act towards them in such a manner as to signify that they feel their want of confidence. Much less would they be justified in punishing them in any way, or depriving them of any privilege or position because they have kept themselves reserved with regard to the affairs of their own conscience. Any such conduct on the part of Superiors would be clearly an indirect way of inducing their subjects to make the manifestation, contrary to the letter and the spirit of the Decree.

Subjects are to remember that they are bound to denounce Superiors who may be guilty in any of the above ways. It is not a matter of choice. Religious may love their Superiors, they may not like to do anything to harm them; they may fear to give displeasure, or that their lives may be made uncomfortable afterwards; but, none of these reasons suffice to exempt them from the obligation of denouncing, as it is distinctly commanded by the Decree. Besides, if they love their Superiors they will be ready to do them a service, and they cannot serve them better than by helping to put them right when they go wrong. They need have no fear in reality, as the denunciation may be made in secret, and those to whom it is made are bound to secrecy and to protect those who denounce from any persecution or annoyance that might follow from such a denunciation. All should have sufficient courage for the sake of their Institute, to do that which the ecclesiastical Superiors prescribe as necessary for its good government and for the peace of Communities. There may be a special difficulty in the case when a Superior General may be the transgressor, as few Religious know how to write to the

Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, in Rome. In such a case, I think the denunciation may be made through the Bishops in these countries and in America. And should any Religious prefer to send the letter to Rome they may easily do so. They may write it in English, although it would be better if written in French or Latin, and address it to the Secretary, Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, Rome. It will be, with greater certainty, received by the Sacred Congregation if signed and stamped by the Bishop of the Diocese, and will be more likely to take effect than if merely signed and sent by a simple Religious. Religious men may send it through their Procurator and Religious women may do so through their Cardinal Protector in case they have one. It is to be hoped that all Mothers General may consider the difficulty of this denunciation so that their subjects may never have occasion to have recourse to it.

### SECTION III.—VOLUNTARY MANIFESTATION ALLOWED.

*This, however, by no means hinders subjects from opening their minds to their Superiors freely and of their own accord, for the purpose of obtaining from their prudence, in doubt and anxiety, advice and direction for acquiring virtue and making progress in perfection.*

Religious subjects are not forbidden to make a manifestation of conscience. They are free to do so if they like, but in making it of their own accord, they should bear in mind, the end for which such a manifestation is permitted; the subject-matter; and the manner of making it. The end which the Religious should have in view in giving the account of conscience, and the Superior in listening to it, is for obtaining advice and direction in case of doubt and anxiety, and for acquiring virtue and making progress in perfection as expressly stated. The advice and directions may be for the better observance of the Rule, and for the better fulfilment of the religious duties entrusted to them, either as regards household duties or works of charity, such as visiting the poor, or the workhouses and hospitals; or, as regards teaching or school management. Young and inexperienced Religious may expect at times to obtain consolation and encouragement in their difficulties and trials, by giving an account of them to kind and prudent Superiors. Whenever they wish to do so, I would advise them strongly to confine themselves carefully to the

subject-matter proper of this manifestation, when made out of Confession, and to enable them to form some correct judgment on this matter I here suggest the points on which a Religious may speak, and to which she should confine herself. 1. Whether she is happy and contented in her vocation? 2. Whether she finds the observance of her vows and Rules very difficult? 3. Whether she has any trouble or sorrow, and what may be the cause of it? 4. Whether she likes her employment, and is anxious to acquit herself well of it and with success? 5. Whether she is faithful in the exercises of piety, and feels devotion in them? 6. Whether she makes progress in perfection, and what is the virtue to which she applies herself with the greatest advantage? 7. Whether she is faithful in the practice of penance and mortification? 8. Whether she has an aversion towards or any particular friendship for any of the Sisters? 9. Whether she has remarked anything on the part of the Sisters likely to scandalise or disedify the others, or whether, on the contrary, she is edified by their conduct and conversation?

It would be well if the subjects and Superiors would confine themselves to these general points in those cases, when the manifestation is freely sought for and made. Although there is no prohibition to make known one's sins, it is inadvisable, and should be entirely discouraged in regard to temptations and trials concerning the virtue and vow of chastity. These should be strictly confined to the Confessional, and not manifested out of the Sacred Tribunal. This recommendation is of the greatest importance, as it is intended to protect any such manifestation from abuse, and from a species of profanation of one of the most august Sacraments of the Church; and from any sham imitation of it by accusing ourselves of our sins to any but a priest duly approved by the Bishop.

As to the *manner* of making the manifestation, I have only to remark: 1. That there ought to be on the part of the subjects, humility, simplicity, and confidence in the Superior; and 2. In the Superior there should be charity, compassion, prudence, reserve, and discretion; these are essential qualities for those who in Religion are appointed to guide and direct others in the path of virtue. Above all, Superiors are most strictly obliged to observe profound silence concerning those things that are confided to them by those who give an account of conscience. If they are not bound by the seal and secret of Confession, as this only arises from Sacramental Confession, they are bound by a secret



something analagous to it; a secret confided to them which they are bound to keep by the natural law and by the divine law. They cannot, therefore, make known the things confided to them in this way, either to the Superior General, or to the Assistants, Councillors, or Consultors of the Institute; neither can they make them known even to the Confessor, at least not in such a way that he may know the person who has made the manifestation. Moreover, they cannot make use of the confidence received in this way for the external direction of the Sisters, and, above all, they must guard against punishing and mortifying a Sister because of faults, the knowledge of which they have received in strict confidence, but on the contrary, they should try and be as kind, cheerful, and affable with that Sister, in the same manner as if they had known nothing whatever about her faults or failings.

#### SECTION IV.—ORDINARY AND EXTRAORDINARY CONFESSORS.

*Moreover, without interfering with the prescriptions of the Council of Trent in regard to the Ordinary and Extraordinary Confessors of Communities, (Sess. 25, chap. 10 de Regularibus.) or with what is laid down by Pope Benedict XIV. (in his Constitution Pastoralis curæ.) His Holiness admonishes all Prelates and Superiors to grant an Extraordinary Confessor to their subjects, as often as for conscience sake they are constrained to ask for one; and to do this without in any way inquiring the reason of the request or showing displeasure. And lest this prudent regulation should be without lasting effect, His Holiness exhorts all Ordinaries to appoint, in places of their dioceses where there are communities of women, suitable priests with faculties, to whom they may easily have recourse for the Sacrament of Penance.*

There are several points of importance that affect nuns under this head. I shall first make known the provisions of the general laws of the Church, especially those of the Council of Trent and those contained in the Constitution of Benedict XIV. (*Pastoralis curæ*, 5th August, 1748), in regard to the ordinary and extraordinary Confessors of Nuns.

We may consider nuns as *enclosed* or not *enclosed*. Nuns enclosed and living in their convent, whether *exempt* or not *exempt* from Episcopal Jurisdiction, can only confess to a Confessor specially

approved by the Bishop for that convent. As we have no convents of nuns in these countries *exempt* from Episcopal Jurisdiction, I need not again refer to this distinction between *exempt* and not *exempt*.

1. If these nuns are out of their convent with due permission, either on account of their health, or on a journey, or questing, any Confessor who has faculties from the Bishop to hear the Confessions of seculars, may hear and absolve them. 2. In the time of a Jubilee the privilege is usually granted that these nuns, even in the convent, may choose any Confessor for their Jubilee Confession who is approved by the Bishop of the place for hearing Confessions; or for a convent even in another diocese. I may here refer to the Bull, "Quod Auctoritate Apostolica" for the last Jubilee, 22 Dec., 1885, wherein it is stated: *Universis Christi fidelibus, tam laicis quam ecclesiasticis, secularibus et Regularibus cujusvis Ordinis et Instituti, etiam specialiter nominandi, facultatem concedimus ut sibi ad hunc effectum eligere possint, quemcumque Presbyterum Confessarium tam Secularem quam regularem ex actu approbatis; quâ facultate uti possint etiam moniales, novitiae, aliaeque mulieres intra Claustra degentes, dummodo Confessarius approbatus sit pro monialibus* 3. The Confessors may be *ordinary* or *extraordinary*; because we have to remember, that Bishops and other Superiors of nuns are bound to provide for their subjects beside the *ordinary*, (a) *two* or *three* times in the year an *extraordinary* Confessor, to whom all the nuns are bound to present themselves, if not for Confession, which they are not bound to make to him, in order, at least, that they may receive from him some salutary advice. (Con. Trid. Sess. 25, c. 10. Benedictus XIV. *Pastoralis Curæ*.) (b) A particular Confessor at the hour of death, if the Religious should ask for one; also some times during life should it happen on certain occasions that any nun may have a great difficulty, and refuse to confess to the Ordinary. (Benedict XIV. *Pastoralis Curæ*.) Besides these prescriptions we may note the following: (c) One *ordinary* Confessor is to be appointed for each convent, who, according to the instructions of the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars (26 Nov., 1602 et 10 March, 1634), is to be changed every three years. The change every three years is not usually observed in missionary countries, and the Bishop may give or renew the approbation for as long a period as he may judge fit and convenient. (d) During the time the *extraordinary* Confessor is exercising his ministry at a convent, the *ordinary* should not exercise his, nor should he even go to the convent at

that time, according to the instructions of Benedict XIV. (*Pastoralis Curæ*.)

If the convents are not enclosed, as is the case with almost all the modern Congregations of women, the regulations as to their Confessors are now the same, practically speaking, as those given for enclosed convents. The Bishops and Ordinaries require and reserve to themselves, a special approbation for nuns, as is clear from their letters of approbation given to Confessors, in which we have the words *exceptis monialibus*, or *etiam non exceptis monialibus*. Benedict XIV. earnestly exhorts Bishops in the Constitution *Pastoralis Curæ* to extend to all Communities of females, the laws of the Council of Trent in regard to the *extraordinary* Confessors of nuns. By this Decree under the name of nuns are included, not only those Religious women who live in enclosed convents, but also recent Congregations of nuns, who take only simple vows and are not enclosed.

By this IV. Article of the Decree the above regulations and prescriptions are declared to be still in force, and we have furthermore an admonition given to *Prelates and Superiors to grant an extraordinary Confessor to their subjects as often as for conscience sake they are constrained to ask for one.*

This does not go to the extent that some might imagine, namely that a nun can have recourse constantly to the *extraordinary* without ever going to the *ordinary* Confessor. This would amount to two ordinary Confessors for a convent, one for the Community, and one for the individual nun or nuns. Again, subjects should remember that the concession is granted to them *for conscience sake*, and it ought never to be abused, nor should any indulge their fancy or simple inclinations to trouble Superiors to call the *extraordinary* and to trouble an *extraordinary* to come, who perhaps has very little spare time, unless for genuine and conscientious reasons. However, Superiors have not to inquire into the reasons; their simple duty is to call in an *extraordinary*. By a Decree of the Sacred Congregation, 1st February, 1892, it was decided that Religious cannot claim an extraordinary Confessor constantly; and again, it was decided that if the Sisters, or even a majority of them, should have recourse constantly to the extraordinary, the Bishop may not remain silent, but should interfere in such a way that the Bull *Pastoralis Curæ*, which ordains one Confessor for each Convent, should be observed.

“Let the Ordinary,” says the Sacred Congregation, “admonish

the nuns and the Sisters in question that the disposition or provision of the IV. Article of the Decree "*Quemadmodum*" constitutes only an exception to the common law, and applies only to cases of true and absolute necessity, as often as the Sisters are obliged to have recourse to the extraordinary; all that is prescribed by the Council of Trent and by the Constitution of Benedict XIV. remaining intact and in force."

Two practical questions arise here. 1.—Is a Superior bound to call in as special Confessor the one for whom the Sister asks? And 2.—In the case of nuns without enclosure, can they be permitted by the Superior to go to the public church and confess there to any priest who may be hearing confessions?

With regard to the first question, it may be said that, strictly speaking, a Superior is not bound in every instance to call in the particular Confessor that may be asked for; but supposing a Sister, for conscience sake, should ask for a particular Confessor, and that there are no reasons to suppose that his ministry will not be otherwise than for the greater good of that Sister and the greater consolation of her soul, I think that charity would oblige the Superior to grant the Sister the favour she asks. As a matter of fact, the Sacred Congregation, in answer to a doubt proposed by the Bishop of Malaga, decided by a Decree of 17th August, 1891, that the selection of the extraordinary Confessor may be made by the subject rather than by the Superior, from amongst those Confessors appointed by the Ordinary for the confessions of the nuns. This I understand is the spirit of the Church, as may be shown from the Constitution of Benedict XIV. "A nun who is not sick and has no complaint against either the regular or special Confessor, asks, nevertheless, for her spiritual consolation and advancement in virtue, to confer with a priest of her own choosing occasionally." "In this case," says Benedict XIV., "it often happens that Bishops, and especially Superiors of Orders, prove to be hard and unyielding. This severity did not please Us heretofore, and it pleases Us still less to-day." "Under such circumstances condescension is opportune, not only for Communities in general, but also for each individual member. To accede indiscriminately to each request of the kind, or to risk rejecting all of them, would be equally unwise. Let the ecclesiastical Superiors examine into the reasons of the request, the subjective conditions, the circumstances, etc.; and if this examination brings out no serious reason for refusal, let them imitate St. Francis of Sales and the saintly Cardinal

Barbadigo by being paternal and liberal towards the Sisters in maintaining their spiritual liberty." (Manifestation of conscience, etc., by Rev. Pere de Langogne. Eng. Translation pages 116-7.)

In answer to doubts proposed by the Bishop of Malaga, the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, by a Decree of 17th August, 1891, decided :—1. That the Superior is bound to call in the special Confessor, even though she may plainly see that the necessity is only fictitious, but apprehended as real either through scrupulosity or some other mental defect, by the person asking. 2. Subjects are, however, admonished that they cannot ask for extraordinary Confessors unless obliged to do so for conscience sake.

We have provision made against any abuse in this matter, and Superiors need not fear the action of troublesome or fanciful Religious, from the fact, that the extraordinary is not bound always to come, and he ought not to come when he knows that the Religious ask for him without sufficient reason. The question was put to the Sacred Congregation whether the extraordinary Confessors, when they know that there is no probable cause for having recourse to them, are bound in conscience to decline to hear the Confessions of Sisters thus applying, and the answer was given in the affirmative. (Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, 1st Feb., 1892.)

As to the 2nd question, that is, whether nuns not enclosed may confess to any approved Confessor in the public church, having obtained the permission of the Superior? I may say that in places where nuns are accustomed to go to Confession in the public church they may confess to any approved priest, even though an ordinary Confessor may be appointed by the Bishop for their convent; and in such a case there appears to be no necessity for appointing an extraordinary Confessor for these convents. Again, it is taught by La Croix and others that nuns who are lawfully out of their convent can be absolved by any approved Confessor. The reason is because the Constitution of Gregory XV. *Inscrutabili* and of other Pontiffs which forbid nuns to confess to any priest except those specially approved for them by the Bishop, are to be understood of nuns *living within their Convents*. They suppose that nuns are always within their enclosure. Every approved Confessor, hearing in a public church, may therefore absolve any nun who may by *accident* come to him for confession. If this were not the case grave inconvenience might often arise when nuns have to remain some time away from their convents, and

might therefore often have to deprive themselves of the Sacrament of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. (Bucceroni, Vol. II., No. 792 and 793.)

Now, with regard to the active Congregations of nuns, such as Sisters of Charity and of Mercy, all nursing Sisters, visiting Sisters, teaching Sisters in elementary schools, and all Sisters who regularly go out of their convents for the various duties that belong to their Institutes, there is no law of the Church forbidding them to go to Confession and to receive absolution in the churches of the diocese from any Confessor who has faculties for hearing Confessions. A particular Bishop might think it well to forbid the nuns to do so, but we have not to suppose any such prohibition unless the Bishop makes it known and promulgates it in such a way that it may be clearly understood both by the nuns and the priests. With greater reason it may be said that in the case where convents are under a Mother General or Provincial, and situated in different dioceses, the Sisters who are merely on a visit or passing through may go to Confession to the Confessor of the convent where they find themselves, even though they may be *de familia* in a convent situated in another diocese, just in the same manner as lay persons can go to Confession in any diocese in which they may be staying or passing through, to the approved priests of that diocese. This appears to me so certain that I should not have even referred to the matter were it not that some cases are known to have happened in which Confessors made some difficulty about hearing the Confessions of nuns who, with full permission, were staying at one of their own convents, in another diocese than that in which the convent to which they belonged was situated.

In accordance with this Article of the Decree we may illustrate the manner in which some Bishops make provision for their convents by referring to the practice observed in this diocese. The Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster has made ample provision for all the convents and communities of his diocese by following the exhortation (which is not a command) of the Pope, and has appointed, not one, but a certain number of *extraordinary Confessors*, to whom any member of any community of women in his diocese may easily have recourse for the Sacrament of Penance. A list of these Confessors is regularly sent to all the communities of the Diocese of Westminster, and such an arrangement facilitates matters for Superiors and subjects, and gives effect

in the fullest and most suitable manner to the Decree of the Sacred Congregation.

SECTION V.—THE PERMISSION OR PROHIBITION OF HOLY COMMUNION.

*With regard to the permission or prohibition of Holy Communion, His Holiness decrees that such permissions or prohibitions belong only to the Confessor, ordinary or extraordinary; and that Superiors have no authority to interfere in this matter, except in the case of a subject who, since the last Sacramental Confession, has given scandal to the community, or has committed some grave external fault, in which case Holy Communion may be forbidden until the person has again been to the Sacrament of Penance.*

This Article settles finally the respective authority of the Confessor and of the Superior with regard to Holy Communion. In some convents the Superiors claimed and exercised a certain right in this matter. Leaving the interior and essential dispositions of their subjects to the Confessor, they thought that they should take the exterior conduct of the Sisters into consideration and permit or refuse them Communion accordingly. Thus if they detected in a Sister exterior dissipation, light behaviour, external acts of impatience, words contrary to charity or obedience, want of mortification of the eyes, breaches of silence, etc., they would forbid the Sister to go to Communion. Again, in some convents it was the custom for the Sisters, even after Confession or on the mornings for Communion, to present themselves before the Mother Superior and ask her permission for their Holy Communion. Fr. Pie de Langogne gives us an example of an abuse of this kind. "In a community of a large town of France, the Superioress, on fixed days, installed herself in an arm-chair prepared *ad hoc*, in the choir, and each Religious came and knelt before her to make her manifestation of conscience previous to the Communion Mass. In brief, she lacked only the stole and the power to absolve! And yet this Superioress was a woman of extraordinary piety and humility, rare intelligence, and great goodness of heart. On learning that this custom of hers was not in accordance with the spirit of the Church, she stopped it at once; but it had endured for half a century, and this good Superioress had acted in the utmost good faith." (Manifestation of Conscience, English Translation pages 65—66.)

Such permissions have no longer to be asked by nuns or Brothers from their Superiors, but only from the Confessor. This is to be understood of the Communions of Rule, of frequent and daily Communions, or extraordinary Communions, such as Communions on the feasts of particular Sisters, or on the occasion of the deaths or anniversaries of relatives, or on days of special devotion. The Superiors cannot forbid Sisters to go to Communion for light reasons, and we are not again to meet with cases such as the following: "You, my good Sister, have let fall this candlestick and candle: you will not go to Communion for a whole week!" which is a historical fact. (Manifestations of Conscience by Rev. Pie de Langogne, page 146, English Translation.)

The only cases in which they can forbid their subjects to go to Communion are, when a subject has given scandal to the Community or has been guilty of some grave external fault since last Confession. The scandal should be of a serious nature, that is, any wrong word or action that may be the occasion of the spiritual ruin of others. It includes any word or action evil in itself, or having the appearance of evil, and may be the occasion of our neighbour falling into sin, as for example, 1—Those who give bad example to those under them. 2—Those who by their words engage others in dangerous conversations against obedience and charity, and who encourage insubordination and a spirit of revolt. 3—Those who ridicule and laugh at others on account of their piety. 4—Those who provoke others to anger, and who disturb the peace of the Community by their conduct and example. 5—Those who encourage others in their faults by praise or flattery, and are the means of introducing abuses into the Community. Such scandal, whether direct or indirect, is a special sin against charity. I suppose real active scandal and of a serious kind: and we must not include in it pharasaical scandal; as some good, well-meaning Religious often take scandal from trifles, from things that are not at all sinful, and in these cases the scandal is not *given* but *taken*; and good Religious are not to be deprived of Communion because of the weakness, the foolishness or the evil-mindedness or malice of those who are scandalised without sufficient cause, or for trifling reasons. Then again Communion may be forbidden by the Superior on account of some *grave* external fault. They must remember that the fault must be grave, that is what is considered a mortal sin, as distinct, as the sin of wilfully missing Mass on



Sunday or eating meat on Friday, or an act of violence that would do serious bodily injury to another.

Even in cases of scandal and external grave faults, and especially when the external faults are only doubtfully grave, great prudence and discretion must be used by the Superior before forbidding Communion; and, that she may be just on these occasions, it would be better when possible always to consult the Confessor beforehand.

The Holy Communion may only be forbidden until the person has again been to Confession. In this connection, since the publication of the Decree, the following question was put to the *Canoniste Contemporain*: A Religious commits an exterior fault that is grievously culpable; the Superior forbids him to receive Holy Communion; the Religious goes to Confession and then does not repair the fault committed. He had, for example, answered the Superior impudently and that before the Brothers. Ought the Superior to insist upon his not communicating until he has made reparation?" "We answer *Salvo meliori judicio* that the Superior has neither to retain nor to take away his prohibition; it falls *ipso facto*. It may, in fact, be presumed that the Confessor has not believed this reparation necessary under the circumstances, or that he judged it inopportune to insist upon it, for the time being, in the penitent's disturbed state of mind, and in order not to deprive him of Communion. If the Superior should still prohibit, he would arrogate to himself a right that he does not possess, and implicitly constitute himself judge in the last resort of the disposition of the Religious." (Manifes. of Cons. by Rev. Pie de Langogne, pages 148--9, Eng. Trans.)

#### SECTION VI.—COMMUNIONS OF RULE AND FREQUENT COMMUNIONS.

*All, therefore, are admonished to prepare themselves diligently, and to go to Communion on the days appointed by their Rules; and whenever by reason of the fervour and spiritual progress of any one, the Confessor shall judge more frequent Communion expedient, the Confessor himself shall be able to permit it. But whoever obtains from the Confessor leave for more frequent or even daily Communion shall make it known to the Superior; and a Superior who thinks that there are just and grave reasons against such frequent Communion, must declare the same to the Confessor, whose judgment shall be final.*

The Rules and Constitutions serve as a kind of guide to Con-

fessors for the Communions of the Sisters. They ought not to make their own rules and regulations for the Community. I may here quote an extract from the work of the Rev. P. de Langogne on this subject. "This clause is addressed less to Superiors than to certain chaplains who pay little attention to the Constitutions that set apart days for Communion" This author gives a reason for not remaining silent upon the mistakes of some chaplains,—“Mistakes,” he says, “that would be incredible if they were not proven. One chaplain, in order to affirm his exclusive right to regulate their Communions, forbade Religious who were his penitents to go to Communion on the days set apart therefor by their Rule. Another divided the Community into three groups, formed at random, which were to take turns in approaching the Holy Table. Another, making a strange appeal for providential indications, wrote the name of each Religious on a separate piece of cardboard, and then shuffled and cut them, as is done with playing cards, and sent those to the Holy Table whose names were on the cardboards lifted by him in cutting the pack to the exclusion of the others. Still another was careful to announce periodically to each of the Religious who were his penitents, so that none of them could plead ignorance of it, that he declined all responsibility in regard to their Communions, even those of Rule. As a matter of fact, he had neither to assume nor to decline the responsibility of their Communions of Rule. If the Religious gave the Confessor no cause to forbid them, permission to receive on the appointed days was theirs of right and *a priori*.”

When the Communions are regulated by the Constitutions of the Institute or by custom, the Confessor, cannot without sufficient reason, refuse to authorise them. He may sometimes retrench some of them in order to make the tepid more vigilant, and to excite them to greater fervour. Unless the regular days of Communion be observed, good order may suffer in a Convent. Some of the nuns going to Communion one morning, others another morning, now one, another day five or six, and so on. We can easily understand that this would be the occasion of trouble, and sometimes would interfere with the other observances of a Convent at which all the Religious should be present, or duties to which the Sisters have to attend at an early hour in the morning; the breakfast, the class-work and lessons, the schools, etc. It might, therefore, be a great inconvenience to the Superiors and Sisters to interfere with and change the days fixed by Rule

for Communion, and the Confessor ought to bear this in mind when asked by individual Sisters for *extra* Communions when no real reason exists for making an exception to the general rule.

Should the Rules of any Institute contain a clause prohibiting the nuns to receive Communion on days other than those prescribed, such a clause is abrogated by the present Decree as declared by the Sacred Congregation of Bishops and Regulars, 17th August, 1891.

The Sisters are supposed to go to Communion on the appointed days, and they ought not to absent themselves from it without cause. If a Sister absents herself from Communion occasionally it would be unwise of the Superior to call attention to it. But should a Sister fall into the habit of neglecting her Communion, then the Superior ought, without doubt, to speak to her about the matter, but always in private and never publicly in the presence of the Community. Even in representing the matter privately to the Sister, there is great need of prudence and forethought. A Sister might easily be exposed to the danger of going against her conscience to Communion through fear of the remarks of the Superior, or of losing her reputation in her eyes. Neither the Superior nor the Sisters should permit suspicions to enter their minds when they see Sisters staying away, on occasions, from Communion, as scruples, troubles, interior trials, and unfounded fears are, ordinarily speaking, the cause why Religious abstain from Communion, and such Religious are more to be pitied than blamed.

It may happen that on account of exceptional holiness and fervour some Religious ought to be permitted to go more frequently to Communion than the times appointed by Rule, and may even desire to receive daily. In such cases the Confessor is the judge, and he may be guided by the Decree *Cum ad aures* of the Sacred Congregation, 12th Feb., 1676, and formally approved by Innocent XI. "Even those Religious who ask permission to receive Holy Communion every day ought to be urged to communicate on the days fixed by the Rules of the Order. If some of them have such purity of soul, and are inflamed with such fervour of spirit, that they appear to be worthy to receive the Blessed Sacrament more frequently, or even daily, let permission be given them by their Superiors." The Confessor either ordinary or extraordinary is the only one according to the present Decree who can grant this permission, and he is to be

guided in granting it by the judgment he forms of the purity of soul, and the fervour of spirit, and the spiritual wants of his penitents. That order and regularity may be preserved, the Religious whom the Confessor allows to go more frequently to Communion, should make known the permission to the Superior, and this latter can never interdict or forbid the Communions allowed by the Confessor. The notification of this permission is to be given, not by the Confessor, but by the penitent, and no answer is required from the Superior; it has to be given only in cases of more frequent or daily Communion, and not in the cases of Communion of Rule. This notification need not be made *toties quoties*, but it is sufficient to give it once for all. It has only to be communicated, not submitted to the Superior.

The Decree provides for the case where there are grave and just reasons against such frequent Communion. These reasons have to be declared to the Confessor, whose judgment shall be final with regard to them.

It often happens that Religious, through sickness or some other just cause, cannot receive Communion on the days prescribed by the Rules, and afterwards they desire "to take up" their Communions, as they say; and to receive on other days as well as on the days appointed, to make up the number of Communions missed. The Confessor, in such cases, may wisely permit one or two *extra* Communions, but the Religious must not think that they are bound to make up for Communions omitted for a just cause; and they have not the same right to these Communions as to the regular Communions of Rule. Inconvenience and irregularity might easily creep in were this to be regarded as a common practice. A Sister might have a long illness of a month or longer, and when we think of the number of Communions omitted during that time; and supposing, further, that three or four Sisters may have been ill at the same time, each day we should witness the singularity of these exceptional and individual Communions, which might prove, in time, to be a little puzzling to the Superiors, to the Confessors, as well as to the Religious themselves.

#### SECTION VII.—PENALTIES TO BE INCURRED.

*His Holiness moreover commands all General, Provincial, and Local Superiors of the Institutes above mentioned, whether of men or women*

*diligently and carefully to observe all the regulations of this Decree, under the penalties to be incurred "ipso facto" by Superiors who disobey the mandates of the Apostolic See.*

From this clause we have to understand that all the precepts of the Decree bind under grave sin, by reason of their being commanded under ecclesiastical penalties. It is the common opinion of Canonists that an ecclesiastical precept under a grave penalty, especially if it is declared to be incurred *ipso facto*, obliges under mortal sin, and contains grave matter; otherwise the precept would be unjust and iniquitous, by imposing a grave penalty for a light fault. There are some theologians, as Cajetan and others, however, who hold that the threat of a grave penalty, or a penalty *ferendæ sententiæ*, does not signify always a precept binding under mortal sin. The penalties referred to in this Clause are *latæ sententiæ*, or to be incurred, *ipso facto*, that is, as soon as the fault is committed; and, therefore, they signify that the regulations bind *sub gravi*, or under mortal sin. It is not easy to determine what these penalties are. The usual ecclesiastical penalties are *suspension*, *excommunication*, and *interdict*. We cannot suppose *suspension*, as this only affects persons in Sacred Orders, and these precepts are directed only to Superiors not in Sacred Orders, as the Superiors of nuns and Brothers. And it is certain that nowhere in Canon Law is *interdict* or *excommunication* fulminated against religious Superiors who disobey the mandates of the Apostolic See. We may therefore conclude that the penalties herein referred to must mean the privation of office, or the privation of *active* and *passive voices* in capitular elections. The Rev. P. de Langogne, writing on this subject, says: "To ascertain what are these penalties, we must compare the present Decree with previous Decrees of an equally disciplinary nature with reference to Religious, and in the sanctions of which are explicitly enumerated the penalties incurable by their violation. One of the best known of these Decrees is that of Clement X., dated March 16th, 1675, which prescribes conditions as to the age of admission *inter claustra* of Tertiaries, Oblates, etc., conditions which are obligatory under penalties for their violation, of deprivation of dignities and charges, and of perpetual incapacitation for either *active* or *passive* participation in them; the penalty being incurred *ipso facto*. Other Decrees, notably that of Clement VII. (13th March 1599) contain in addition other penalties reserved to the judgment of Our Most Holy Father."

The same author adds: "It goes without saying that the Supreme Legislator retains the plenitude of his powers in regard to this Decree, as in regard to all others, whether to reduce the punishment, or if the case demand it, to increase it."

The further question here arises whether these penalties incurable *ipso facto* oblige in conscience before they are declared? That is, are Generals, Provincials, and local Superiors who have disobeyed the regulations and continue to disobey them, forthwith to resign their charges and to remain incapacitated from voting in Chapters, and to be ineligible; or may they wait until it is declared by proper authority that they have incurred the penalties? I find diversity of opinion amongst Canonists on this point. It will suffice for our purpose, to refer to three of these opinions. The first holds that they do oblige before declaration even though the fault be occult. (Suarez de legibus, Cajetan and others.) The second opinion holds, and with great probability, that they do not bind before declaration as they are grave penalties, as it is a species of deposition from their position and state. (Sanchez, Lessius and others.) There is a third opinion, which says that if the case is occult it does not bind in conscience before declaration, as it is against the natural law to require a person to defame himself. If public, then it obliges before declaration. From these various opinions it is evident that the case is doubtful, and as doubtful censures and doubtful penalties do not bind, we may conclude with the second opinion that these penalties are not to be enforced, and do not take effect before declaration.

The Rev. P. de Langogne already quoted, thus concludes his remarks on this subject: "The violation being established, the criminal must be *ipso facto* subjected to the said penalties. Let Superiors remember, however, that even in respect to penalties incurred *ipso facto*, the declaratory sentence is a necessary preliminary." (Page 157, Note Cf. Rigantius: Commentar de Regulis Cancell, Reg. LVIII., 37, *ubi plurimi et quidem optime notæ citantur anctores.*)

#### SECTION VIII.—INSERTION IN THE CONSTITUTIONS AND READING.

*Lastly, His Holiness commands that copies of this Decree, translated into the vernacular, be inserted in the Constitutions of the aforesaid*

*pious Institutes ; and that at least once a year, in each house, at a fixed time, either at the public table or in a Chapter specially called for this purpose they be read in a loud and clear voice.*

It is by reason of this clause that we are to place the above regulations and precepts as now forming a part of the Rules and Constitutions of the respective Institutes. The Holy Father acts not only by reason of his dominative power and the power of jurisdiction, but as the Chief Superior of all these Institutes, and to him the members have vowed obedience, and his command is that the said copies of the Decree be inserted in the Constitutions. They will therefore form part of the Constitutions, having the binding force of law, and requiring obedience from all those whom they may concern.

The reading of them once a year may be at the time of the annual retreat, or at any other time that the Superiors may determine. They have to be read in each house, and this has not to be restricted to the Mother House, or to the larger convents, but should be observed in the smaller houses where there may be only three or four nuns. The reading should, moreover, be loud and distinct, so that all the Sisters may be able to hear and understand the several clauses of the Decree, and know the rights and obligations which they convey. And they may be read by the Superior or any other member of the community, as there is nothing to lead us to suppose that they are to be read by the chaplain or Confessor, or by a priest appointed by the Ordinary. Again, the whole Decree must be read, and not a compendium of it. No part of it must be passed over or omitted, not even that clause which speaks of *having recourse to the Holy See*, and of *penalties that are to be incurred*. In favour of the reading of the *whole* of the Decree the following arguments are offered: —“It is not permitted to modify the text of the Apostolical Constitutions, or to read them *here* and *there*, or to present them to hearers in any other way than that in which the legislator has put them.”

The reading of the whole text will not encumber the memory, since the memory will not retain it word for word, whilst an abridgment would very likely render the law obscure and fail to convey its whole meaning. Besides, this reading is, in the mind of the legislator, a new promulgation of the law; and, a promulgation ought to be word for word “*de verbo ad verbum*.”

The concluding words of the Decree—*His Holiness has thus determined and decreed, all things whatsoever contrary thereto, even if worthy of special mention, notwithstanding.*

From this derogatory clause we have to conclude that all the concessions of general laws are suppressed by it; that all special concessions contrary to its provisions are also suppressed, and according to the common axiom of Canonists: *ubi lex non distinguit nec nos distinguere debemus*, we have to look on this Decree as extending not only to the Institutes aimed at, but also to their Noviciates, and Scholasticates under the charge of the nuns or Brothers.

I may conclude with the words of Fr. Langogne: "No interpretation of the Decree is authentic except that which is given by the Sacred Congregation itself. No limitation is legitimate except that which is accorded by the said Congregation. Outside, then, of indults, that may be asked for, and milder interpretations that may, perhaps, be solicited, it seems that the very text of the Decree and the object which the Holy See wishes to attain, exclude absolutely such a limitation (namely, that of Noviciates and Scholasticates). The present law is just as likely, and even more so, to have good results in the Noviciates and Scholasticates as in the professed houses." (Eng. Trans. page 171.)

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## CONCLUSION.

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Having treated of the various articles contained in the Decree, and given their explanation and interpretation, I may again advert to the obedience due to their enactments, and the reverence with which they should be received.

The accepting of Pontifical laws and their observance may be an exercise of faith as well as of obedience. It is a doctrine or truth of faith that the Supreme Pontiff has legislative power over the entire Church, and over all the faithful; and that he has received this power *immediately* or *directly* from Christ.

The Vatican Council in its Constitution, *Pastor Æternus* has defined that the Roman Pontiffs have received directly from our Lord, the primacy, not only of honour, but also of jurisdiction over the entire Church. This primacy of jurisdiction essentially



and directly contains the full and supreme legislative authority over the Church ; that is the power to make laws binding on the entire Church, and on all the portions of the Church to which they may be directed. This Decree, emanated from that Pontifical authority ; and, all its precepts, should therefore be accepted without question or hesitation, and with devout reverence by those Religious to whom it applies, and who are named in it, the *most chosen portion of the flock of Christ*.

These will undoubtedly render to all its precepts prompt and perfect obedience ; that is true Religious obedience, and not merely Civil and Ecclesiastical obedience. What I here mean by Religious obedience is well described by the Rev. Edmund J. O'Reilly, S. J., when writing on the subject of obedience due to the Pope (Theological Essays, Ch. xx. page 245.) "It is said of Religious and Ecclesiastical Superiors, that they hold the place of God, and that in obeying them we obey God, &c." What does this all come to ? Merely to this, that God wishes their authority to be recognised as coming from Him ; that He requires their subjects to obey them in all that is lawful and within the prescribed range of their authority ; that He wishes them to regard those Superiors as His deputies or delegates ; that he will accept obedience to them as obedience to Himself—this obedience being intended to honour Him in His representatives. . . . There is this difference between Religious obedience—that which belongs to the Religious state—and Civil or even Ecclesiastical obedience, that it is voluntarily undertaken for the sake of an additional exercise of virtue, and an additional sacrifice, not merely for the sake of essential order, and therefore is expected to be fulfilled in a specially punctual and ready manner, extending, as it does, too, to minute details of life, such as are not commonly dealt with by the Church (at large) or by the State."

THE END.

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